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SHORT SERMONS

SECOND SERIES

WITHDRAWN

BY THE

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PREFACE

THE more than kind reception accorded to the first volume of "Short Sermons," and the many requests received for another series, are responsible for the appearance of this second volume. Let no one think that I was unwilling to act on their suggestions, but their very number quite precluded me from doing so.

With a very few exceptions, the subject for each Sunday is taken either from the Epistle or the Gospel of the day. I have had one special object in view—"Frequent Communion"; and when the subject allowed it, I have endeavoured to introduce a few words on behalf of that holy practice. It is obviously the duty of every priest frequently to exhort his people to live up to the spirit of the Decree of the Sacred Congregation, "On Daily Communion," published on December 24, 1905. The following is the substance of what is decreed: "Frequent and daily Communion must be considered to be the right of all the faithful of whatever state or condition of life, so that no one can be prevented from so communicating frequently or daily, provided he is in the state of grace and approaches the Holy Table with a right and pious disposition of mind. Such a "right and pious disposition" the

Decree defines to consist in this—that "Communion should be approached not through custom, or vanity, or human motives, but with the desire of obeying the will of God, of becoming more closely united to God by charity, and of making use of that Divine medicine as a remedy for one's weaknesses and defects" (pp. 142, 143, Rt. Rev. Bishop Hedley, "The Holy Eucharist").

There is a frequent need for a sermon on the Sufferings of our Lord during Lent, the very time when a priest is busier than usual. I have, therefore, added a few sermons on the Passion at the end of the volume, in addition to those on Passion and Palm Sunday.

In alluding, in the sermons on "The Holy Family" and of the Second Sunday after Easter, to Loretto and the Church of "Quo Vadis" in Rome, I am well aware that there are some who doubt and even deny the authenticity of these events, but I prefer and love to cling to the pious traditions of the Church until they are discountenanced or condemned by authority.

I take this opportunity of expressing my gratitude for the Introduction to the first volume of "Short Sermons," written by His Lordship the Rt. Rev. J. C. Hedley, O.S.B., Bishop of Newport, to whose kindness and encouragement I owe more than I can say.

F. P. HICKEY, O.S.B.

December 1st, 1907.

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First Sunday of Advent

THE JUDGMENT

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."—Heb. x. 31.

1. Our own soul: Its powerlessness and anguish.
2. The Judge: Almighty, all-wise, just.
3. The sentence: Irrevocable, avenging, eternal.
4. The publicity and the shame.

In this one phrase St. Paul, my dear brethren, depicts the horror and the dread of the Judgment Day. It would be cruel and tyrannical to bid one think of the Judgment if it were useless to do so. But as by meditating on it and studying it now we can mitigate its terrors, learn how to escape condemnation, and secure a favourable sentence, is it not the height of madness and cowardice not to give it our attention humbly, frequently, and devoutly?

For now we can approach Almighty God, pray, beg pardon, disarm His wrath; but then it will be too late—our poor soul will be utterly powerless and filled with anguish. Fear will make us wither away. To the right, our accusing sins—we cannot disown them; to the left, a crowd of evil spirits bearing witness against us; below, the open abyss of hell; within, our conscience—aye, withering away in abject terror; and before us, the Judge!

Yes, the Judge, Jesus Christ, God and Man—the Almighty Judge, from whom there is no escape, against Whom no resistance can avail. "The Lord will judge His people . . . there is no other God besides Me; I will kill, I will strike, and there is none that can deliver out of My hand." (Deut. xxxii. 36, 39.)

The All-Wise Judge! "Therefore am I troubled at His presence, and when I consider Him I am made pensive with fear." (Job xxii. 15.) Before Whom every secret is laid bare, the hidden stand forth, the dumb reply, silence confesses, the mind gives utterance without words. Against such knowledge no excuse, no pleading, no cunning will avail." (St. Leo.)

The Just Judge! Alas for us, His justice equals His mercy, and how vividly then, when too late, shall we recall His infinite mercies. The just to judge the unjust. "Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in Thy sight no man living shall be justified." (Ps. cxlii. 2.)

And the sentence of the Judge is irrevocable. The time for mercy has now passed. No favour will be granted; no mistake can be made; no repentance then accepted; no imploring heard. He has warned us, and at Judgment the warning will cut off all hope from the sinner for ever. "My Word shall not pass away." (Mark xiii. 31.)

The sentence, moreover, is that of an angry, outraged God. It will be the consuming scorn of Him, so long despised, forgotten, and disobeyed. We shall wish to hide ourselves in hell even to avoid the eye of that avenging Judge.

That sentence is eternal damnation, everlasting fire,

and dwelling with the devil. "Depart from Me, you cursed, unto everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matt. xxv. 41.)

Do we believe in this day of Judgment, that each one of us shall be called up for trial, and an eternal verdict pronounced upon each and every one of us? Do we believe it? If not, our present easy-going, pleasure-seeking existence can be understood. But if we do believe, where is our anxiety about it, our solicitude and earnestness to make our salvation safe and sure?

To force us to bestir ourselves, let us remember the shame and publicity for us to have all our sins of thought, word, and deed made known to all the world. We find it so hard and painful even to whisper our sins to one poor, sinful priest in all secrecy now that we put off our confessions repeatedly, and some give up the practice altogether. Sin must be brought to judgment—either the judgment of mercy and forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance, or the general public Judgment of the last day. All our vileness, hypocrisy, secret sins of our hearts will be then revealed. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," and then to be made the object of scorn, contempt, and hatred, not only to the saints and angels and all good men, but even the damned, who hate and despise each other. Our sins will bring all this upon our soul and an endless eternity of torment—yes, those very sins that we think so little of now, those very sins we commit for things so paltry and vile; those very sins which now a good confession might so easily, secretly, and safely have had forgiven.

Remember the Judgment Day, the anguish and horror of it; the Almighty, All-Wise, and Most Just

Judge; the sentence, irrevocable, avenging, and eternal; and our own public shame and condemnation. Remember these things, and fear them, and then you will repent of sin, keep out of sin, and be filled with one longing desire—I wish to save my soul and escape the Judgment!

Second Sunday of Advent

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

"For what things soever were written, were written for our learning: that through patience and the comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope."—Rom. xv. 4.

1. We reverence the Scriptures as the Word of God on the authority of the Church.
2. To counterbalance worldliness we need the learning and comfort of a spiritual teacher.
3. The Word of God in the Scriptures is to our souls medicine, food, strength, warmth, protection, and direction.
4. The necessity to hear, read, and reverence this Word of God.

A Catholic, my dear brethren, has no scruple or hesitation in accepting the Scriptures as the inspired word of God, simply because the Church bids him do so. Others build up a religion from the Scriptures, and so found their Church. But we belong to a Church that was founded years before one word of the New Testament was written, and during that period the doctrines of Jesus Christ were preserved and handed down by the Tradition of the Church. And amongst other things that were handed down was the list of the authentic books of the Old Testament, and after they were written and accepted, the four Gospels, the Acts and the Epistles of the Apostles, and the Book of the Revelation of St. John.

This accepting the Scriptures on the authority of the Church is not making little of them, but at once raises them above all controversy as the inspired word of God. And there, standing with the Book in hand, is the Teacher, the Divine Teacher, to explain the meaning of the Book to the children.

It is difficult enough for anyone, however good and learned they may be, to live in this world, and not to be swayed and influenced too much by the world. To be in the world and yet not of the world, there is requisite a great power to counterbalance outward attractions by a strong and spiritual inward one. The outward attractions are the things and persons we see and possess and enjoy—the pleasures and comforts of life ; the inward attraction is the voice of God bidding us remember our soul, our Creator, the eternal life to come. We sorely need, then, the learning and the comfort of a spiritual teacher, and this we have in the word of God, the Scriptures taught us and explained to us by the Holy Church. Were it not for the word of God, the world would absorb all our interests, and our souls would be left weak and helpless and starving.

To know what a spiritual life is, to have any interest in the saving of our souls, fearing sin, pleasing God, comes from loving to listen to, and to ponder over, and to remember the word of God.

Yes, in the Holy Scriptures there are words that are medicine to our ailing and wounded souls. To counteract the temptations of the Evil One, ever seeking to injure us, the inspired words of Scripture point out and warn us of dangers, show us our weaknesses, disclose to us even where death lies lurking and concealed. We seek advice for bodily ailment ; how

much more should we do so for the diseases of the soul!

Food is necessary for life, for restoring waste, maintaining health and strength and vigour; so is the word of God for our souls. Daily we gather something fresh from it, and our souls thrive on the wisdom, advice, encouragement found in Holy Writ. And yet we starve our souls, begrudging to read or to listen to it. That the Scripture is our spiritual strength, we cannot doubt. St. Paul says it so plainly. "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." (Rom. i. 16.) Who can open and read the Holy Book even for a little while without finding in their hearts comfort, vigour, fresh influence for good?

The Scriptures likewise inflame our wills with the sacred warmth and fire of Divine love. Especially in this regard the lives and deeds and sayings of holy men recorded in the Scriptures move to admiration. Example bids for and claims our imitation. How many a martyr and hero of Christ and the Church have become such by the glowing examples of noble words and deeds and deaths found in the Scriptures! And most of all in the Gospel narratives, where the sacred life of Christ is revealed to us, the Divine fire of love, that He came to enkindle on the earth, verily inflames our hearts. Oh! the infinite power for good in the recalling to memory and dwelling on the words and miracles and sufferings of Jesus Christ. Our lives would be transformed if these sacred words of Scripture were written on our hearts. But how few give themselves a chance to hear them, know them, or think of them!

The protecting power of the Holy Scriptures is in

this : that through them we have hope. The confidence, the surety of future blessedness is revealed to us in the Holy Writings, and we are filled with hope to do our utmost in the service of God. We are protected from doubt or fear or despair ; we are protected from the deceits of the Evil One, because our hope is sure that God is faithful to reward us, in spite of the toil and delay in reaching our home in our Father's realm.

And the word of God is the directing power of our lives. A book could be filled with the wonderful and miraculous instances of one word of Scripture, heard or read, determining and characterizing the whole life of a Saint. " Go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor," was the call of God to St. Antony, and how many years in the desert, in solitude and silence, did he remain faithful in obedience to that one word ! The instances of St. Augustine, St. Francis of Assisi, and countless others, will occur to your minds, proving the power of one word of Scripture. It is the word of God as was " Follow Me " spoken by Jesus Christ to His Apostles. And Peter and Andrew, and John and James, left their boats, and Matthew his usury, at that one word !

If we had reverence for the Holy Writ our hearts would be moved to obey as well. The Scripture is the inspired word of God speaking to us, so when we find in it how to pray, repent, and trust in God, let us take that word in faith, and bravely use it. The Scripture is full of wisdom, learning, comfort, hope. Let our anxiety be to read it, hear it, ponder over it as much as we can. And the more we do so, the more we shall reverence it ; and we shall find with St. Paul that " it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

Third Sunday of Advent

GOD'S PRESENCE OUR SAFEGUARD

"The Lord is nigh. Be nothing solicitous."—PHIL. iv. 5, 6.

1. Worldly solicitude an evil.
2. But solicitously to walk in God's presence a virtue.
3. And we are encouraged to do this, because—
   "The Lord is nigh";
   Nigh to hearken to us; nigh to succour us;
   Nigh to console us; nigh to reward us.

THERE are many, otherwise very good people, my dear brethren, who spoil their lives by over-much solicitude, anxiety, and worry. Not that they are seeking wicked ends, but they allow worldly cares and family matters to absorb all their interest to such an extent that they have scarcely a thought left for Almighty God.

This is a great mistake, and a far greater evil than we imagine. Take it as a worldling, worry spoils the happiness and joy of this life, ruins our health, and is a cause of unhappiness and discord in a family. And over-solicitude results in nothing. "The expectation of the solicitous shall perish," says the wise man. (Prov. xi. 7.) But regarded from a religious point of view this anxiety is an insult to Almighty God. He is the Provider, the Ruler, the Disposer; we must be ready to take things as He sends them. Is He not

the Father to see after and provide for His children? So this too great solicitude betokens doubt and fear of God's goodness and His providence. It is just the very opposite of that which St. Peter bids us do: "Casting all your care upon Him, for He hath care of you." (1 Pet. v. 7.)

And this worldly solicitude is detrimental to, yea, subversive of all piety and devotion. At times we have all known what it is to try and say our prayers when overwhelmed with anxiety, doubts, and worries. The Evil One simply revels in the myriad distractions that beset the prayers of the worried soul. There can be no recollection, no devotion. Preparation for Confession seems to increase the trouble. We are discouraged, we put it off, and our frequent Communions fall away. We had thought that they would be such a consolation to us when we came to die; but, alas! how easy it is to abandon the good habit.

We must leave things to God. Too much worldly care will ruin us, for piety and devotion cannot coexist with it in the same heart. If we must be solicitous, then let us be solicitous for our soul. "Keep thyself and thy soul solicitously, carefully." (Deut. iv. 9.) Or, as the prophet tells us: "I will show thee, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requireth of thee: Verily . . . to walk solicitous with thy God" (Mich. vi. 8)—to walk mindful of God's Presence, mindful that He is regarding us, mindful that, in all we do, we seek His honour, glory, and good pleasure. This solicitude is not worried and fretful, but is calm and blessed with the peace of God, which keeps our hearts in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And we are encouraged and helped to this keeping our soul and walking with God solicitously by the

remembrance that "the Lord is nigh." These words have a special significance at Christmas-time—"the Lord is nigh." Yes, they are sweet to ponder over, and they give us zest to be solicitous and worthy of Him when He comes.

The Lord is nigh, yes, to hearken to our supplications and the cry of our heart. How blessed to believe and remember that! "You shall call upon Me . . . and you shall pray to Me, and I will hear you. You shall seek Me, and you shall find Me." (Jer. xxix. 12, 13.)

The Lord is nigh to succour us. "Wherefore it behoved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest before God, that He might be a propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that, wherein He Himself hath suffered and been tempted, He is able to succour them also that are tempted." (Heb. ii. 17, 18.) Recall those words; He is able to succour us when we are tempted, because He Himself has been tempted and has suffered. Let us bless the Lord and thank Him that He is nigh to succour us.

The Lord is nigh to console us. Our human nature, our shortcomings, are a source of distress to us many a time. We fail, as it were, so unaccountably that we lose heart and grow despondent. We need consolation and comfort to keep on the way, to keep up to our task, our duty. If we were alone, we should be cowards and give up the good endeavour. But remember we are not alone. The Lord is nigh to console us; He is waiting to be asked. "My soul shall rejoice in the Lord, and shall be delighted in His salvation. . . . Lord, who is like to Thee?" (Ps. xxxiv. 9, 10.) "Give joy to the soul of thy servant, for to Thee,

O Lord, have I lifted up my soul. For Thou, O Lord, art sweet and mild, and plenteous in mercy to all that call upon Thee . . . Thou art great, and dost wonderful things; Thou art God alone." (Ps. lxxxv. 4-10.) "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him . . . He will do the will of them that fear Him; He will hear their prayer and save them." (Ps. cxliv. 18, 19.)

The Lord is nigh to hearken to us, to succour us, to console us—yea, and nigh to reward us. Before we well know that we have cast off worldly cares and anxieties, that we have begun earnestly "to keep our souls" and "walk solicitously with God," the end will be here. Life is very brief. It seems only one continued good beginning. "Be you patient and strengthen your heart, for the coming of the Lord is at hand." (Jas. v. 7, 9.) The Lord is nigh, indeed, to reward us, for the reward begins in this world. It begins, indeed, as soon as we really and genuinely start to walk solicitously with God; for the peace of God then dwells in and guards our hearts. That peace of God is the token that the Lord is nigh. Oh, what a contrast to the misery when worldly cares usurped the whole of our hearts and minds! That peace is the breath of the Lord as He graciously bends over us, hearkening, succouring, consoling, and whispering to us of the reward to come.

Fourth Sunday of Advent

THE VALUE OF OUR SOUL

"What exchange shall a man give for his soul?"—MATT. xvi. 26.

1. How God values our souls taught us by the coming of the Saviour.
2. How do we value our own souls? Distinguish, theoretically and in practice.
3. What exchange can this world give us for a soul which has been purchased for heaven?
4. Our soul the very offering the Saviour seeks at Christmas.

ADVENT, my dear brethren, teaches us how Almighty God values the souls of men, for the burden of the message of Advent is—the coming of the Saviour. It was for the souls of men—their rescue, their sanctification, their salvation—that the Saviour came.

Behold, then, the value that God set on our souls, for it was for their sake the Son of God came down from heaven and became man. For their sake the Infant was born at Bethlehem, and the stable was His first church, where He was worshipped by Mary and Joseph and the shepherds. For their sake the Saviour sanctified poverty, daily toil, and a humble home at Nazareth. Thirty years, for their sake, were spent to teach us how to live; and then, for three years, He taught and preached that our souls might know Him and believe

in Him. And His public life was made wondrous by His kindly words and deeds and miracles, each one a lesson to us, revealing what the good God does for our souls by His graces and His Sacraments. Then, to crown it all, to impress the stamp of Divine love upon His life, of His own will He offered Himself for us in His Passion, and was scourged and crowned with thorns, nailed to the cross, and on it He died to purchase our souls from sin and hell. This is the value the Saviour set upon our souls.

How proud and grateful we should be that God has so loved us as to give His only Son the price and redemption of the souls of men. And do we reverence, treasure, value our souls as we should? My dear brethren, in replying to this we must distinguish. We all know what faith teaches us about the value of our souls, but we must own that our lives frequently, in practice, belie the profession that we make.

For we know and profess that our soul is a spirit, created to the image of God; that it is immortal, destined for heaven, redeemed, enriched with graces; that all the world and all that it can offer of pleasure, happiness, glory, can never satisfy its yearnings, for our soul is meant for God. He is its first beginning, and its last end. The possession of God and the blessed vision of His majesty can alone be its eternal happiness.

But alas! in act, in practice, how sadly different are we! how our lives contradict our profession! Our voice proclaims, repeating our Lord's blessed words, "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul? Or what exchange shall a man give for his soul?" And our daily actions, with a meanness and a pettiness inconceivable, defile these souls with the selfishness and negligence of venial

sins. And, alas! deluded by the tempter, we have bartered away our souls for some mortal sin—a shameful, short-lived pleasure or profit! Like Judas, we have said to the devil, the world, or the flesh, when we have consented to sin, "What will you give me and I will deliver it to you?" Look back, and deplore for what you have betrayed your own soul! Have all our past sins together any equivalent to offer us in exchange for our soul? To that for which a man sins he has made his soul a slave. Let envy, hatred, impure love, the joys of life, avarice, ambition, point to anyone who has made a good bargain with anything they can offer in exchange for his soul. Look through history, and you will find not one. Ask amongst the lost from the successful in this world, who won fame and money and glory and everything they thought that they could desire, and their answer would be the same sad lament, "Alas! what can a man give in exchange for his soul!"

But the Saviour has had faithful ones, who have understood and valued their souls at their proper worth—those who, like blessed Peter, have said, "Behold, we have left all things and have followed Thee" (Matt. xix. 27); those who, like Mary, have chosen the better part, and consecrated their love to Him Who lived and died for love of them; those, the blessed martyrs, who endured dungeons, fire, and sword, rather than lose their soul by denying their faith or being ashamed of the Cross of Christ. All the Saints, all those who have persevered unto death, have practically and heroically despised the world and all that it can offer in exchange for their souls. All that the world could offer would pass away, and their souls were made for eternity. All that the world could offer

was a lie and a delusion : there was no guarantee of truth ; and were their souls to be satisfied with that ? Satisfied ? No ; they despised all that this world could boast of, for the God of heaven had purchased their souls for the kingdom of heaven.

Helped by their example and their prayers, let us wisely treasure and value our immortal souls. Let us bring them to Him Who purchased them with His precious Blood—purchased as well as created them. The Saviour came for our souls' sake. So the very offering He would love that each should make Him at Christmas-time is the soul that He created, the soul that He redeemed, the soul that He has loved so much. Let us prepare it for a home for Him. Repentance can cleanse it, devotion can warm it, humility sweeten it. All else can be driven out, and the door kept open for His coming. And with the help of the Angels, who sang at His birth, and of the Saints, whose souls give Him homage in heaven, we may hope to give Him a welcome when He comes at Holy Communion—the welcome of a soul which dedicates itself entirely to His love and service.

Christmas

THE DIVINE SOCIALIST

"Of His fulness we all have received."—JOHN. i. 16.

1. Socialism helpless without the infinite, in means and power.
2. Christmas tells us of such a Socialist—
   (*a*) Who came down from heaven;
   (*b*) Who became one of ourselves;
   (*c*) Who distributed all He had amongst us;
   (*d*) And who renews this distribution when we will.
3. Yet when He came He was not received. The world cannot see that what it is wanting has been done for it.
4. But at Christmas we, the faithful, welcome Christ, and offer in return our will and our love.

SOCIALISM, my dear brethren, can never be satisfied and work out its end till the infinite joins hands with it and helps it—the infinite in means and in power: in means, because division, repeated division of wealth, will soon end anything except the infinite; and in power, that we may be made heirs and lawful possessors of what it grants us. Anything less than the infinite will not do. It would come to an end some time, and misery and want would reassert themselves.

My dear brethren, this is not all fanciful and imaginary, for Christmas tells us of the coming of such a one—one that is infinite in means and in power: "Christ Jesus, Who being in the form of God, thought

it not robbery to be equal with God; but emptied Himself, being made in the likeness of men." (Phil. ii. 6, 7.)

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us" (John i. 14), that He might join hands with us and help us in our yearnings and our wants. It is no myth or fable that the Son of God became man, was born of the Virgin Mary for our sakes and for our salvation. Born in Bethlehem 1,900 years ago, He was reared as a poor man's child at Nazareth, and then went about evangelizing and doing good, curing the sick, casting out evil spirits, and even raising the dead to life.

He had taught us how to live by the example of His own blameless, spotless life, and then He distributed His infinite riches and merits amongst us, giving us all that we can need to live a holy life here in this world, and to secure eternal life in the kingdom of His Father. You know how He did this. Man had lost through his own disobedience all the good that God had given him, and Christ purchased for us far more than we had lost. He purchased for us forgiveness, faith, graces, heaven, at the price of His own most Precious Blood. Infinite in means and power though He was, He distributed all that He had amongst us.

Alas! how many of us have squandered what He gave us! We are poor and destitute, without the friendship and the grace of God, and we cry in our misery for relief. Here is the wonderful part of the infinite. He had distributed all that He had amongst us at the Redemption. Yes, and all men could have as much as they would, and still the infinite would not run short. So our Lord and Saviour renews the distribution whenever we need it. Infinite in power,

infinite in riches, there is always plenty for those who pray for it. And to crown His bounty and goodness, He even distributes His own Body and Blood to be the food and nourishment of our souls — free and without cost, to all that approach to receive it, as often as we wish, and the oftener we come the more pleased He is. Jesus Christ unites Himself with us. Then, indeed, we share the riches of the Infinite One. From that infinite source we pay the Almighty Father homage and adoration; we pay Him worthy thanks for all His benefits; we pay Him the price of our ransom to free us from our sins; we pay Him full value for all the graces that we need. Thus are the poor and the destitute raised up and enriched by their Saviour. This is the Divine Socialism of Jesus Christ.

Yet, as when He came on earth, He was not recognized—"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (John i. 11)—so now the greater part of the world know Him not. They have forgotten that there is another world beyond this, another life that will last for ever. They are clamouring for riches and comfort and equality here, but never a thought for the world to come. The kingdom of heaven is offered them; they answer by crying out for so much a year. Far more than they are asking for or dreaming of has been done for them, and they will not see it or receive it: like the Jews, who were always desiring and praying for the Messias, and when He came they crucified Him.

How much have we to thank God for, my dear brethren, that we have the faith and can recognize the Saviour when He comes! "But as many as received Him, He gave them power to be made the sons of God." (John i. 12.) And at Christmas-time

our hearts are glad to give a welcome to our Lord. We know that all that happened at His Birth was for our sakes : the poverty, the homelessness, the distress, and anxiety seeking for a shelter of Joseph and Mary—" and she brought forth her first-born Son . . . and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." (Luke ii. 7.) Did not Christ Jesus make Himself one of us, and the poorest of us ? We hasten, then, to adore Him, to give Him that homage which is His, as King of kings and Lord of lords. Though He did come so humbly, faith tells us who He is. This is the Infinite One come down from heaven to be one of us, stripped of His outward glory for our sakes, to fulfil all our yearnings, to distribute all His graces and blessings amongst us—yea, to leave us Himself, and to make Himself our daily Bread, so that we cannot help but know and remember whence is our strength, our health, our life.

If He has thus bestowed all that He has, all that He is, upon us, we in return, with all the fervour and generosity of our heart, should offer Him our will and our love. Our will we offer, so that we may be really one with Him—the same aims, objects, and interests. And we beg of Him to accept our grateful love for all that He has given us—not only for His mercies and graces and care of us, but for His own Blessed Body and Blood that have purified and nourished us so frequently. Oh, poor indeed we should be without Him, of whose " fulness we all have received." " Being rich, He became poor for your sakes ; that through His poverty you might be rich." (2 Cor. viii. 9.)

Last Sunday of the Year

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

"What manner of people ought you to be in holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of the Lord?"—2 PET. iii. 11, 12.

1. Let us look back: another year gone.
2. In the retrospect there stand out—
   Our sins;
   God's graces;
   Necessity of doing better. Why?
3. Beware of two mistakes—delay; and to think that we, of our own powers, can improve.
4. Pray for both the goodwill to start and the power to accomplish.

TO-DAY, my dear brethren, we pass another milestone on the way of life. We can count how many we have passed; God alone can tell how many more or how few we have to pass by before the end. We cannot help it, but the ending of each year makes us think of the ending of our life. How many lives have ended this last twelve months which a year ago had no more appearance of being near the end than our own had! How many of those lives were suddenly ended without time to put their souls in order! If they had only known a year ago they would have acted so differently. Let us, then, my dear brethren, be wise in time, and

do now what we shall have wished to have done when we come to die.

We shall wish that we had looked back and taken a serious review of how the last year will stand the test of God's judgment. Most prominently, I am afraid that we shall all have to own, in that retrospect stand out our sins, our offences, negligences, and infidelities. To some, even mortal sins will loom out like giants in the past. Their glamour has gone, their enticement, the joy and pleasure we thought we should get from them, and now, with a dull, aching regret, we wonder why we ever committed them. And to others their venial sins and imperfections, countless as the Egyptian plague of flies, rise up. What utter carelessness and worldly-mindedness must have been ours! Lost in such numbers, how can we tell how near to mortal sin many of them may have been? Even to the very best enough sinfulness rises up to cause the keenest regret, and forces the humiliating confession that we are but unprofitable servants.

Sorrow for past sin is our first duty to-day—not mere general sorrow, but sorrow for that especially, which we see now has been a peril, and perhaps caused ruin to us this last year.

And in looking back we see a crowd, we may call it, of quite different things. And what are these? God's graces and blessings and favours this last twelve months. But how they vary! Yes, my brethren, some are received with grateful thanks, and treasured and made good use of. And those are the beautiful ones we see amongst them—bright, spotless, and heavenly as they came from God's loving hand. And the others, torn, stained, as if dragged through the mire and trampled on, beautiful, costly robes of grace,

how is it that they have come to this ? Look at them, and you will remember them. Those are the mission graces that you cast aside ; those are confraternity blessings, which you forfeited by infidelity to the regulations ; those are for morning's Mass and Sunday Benedictions ; and those most costly ones were for the Holy Communions that you might have made, that you knew our Blessed Lord wanted you to make, and you would not.

God's merciful graces of the past twelve months, what gratitude they call for, and what an earnest resolution that this year, with God's help, there will be no wasted ones, neglected ones, despised ones by us !

The view of our sins and of God's graces impress one thought upon our minds—the necessity of doing better this coming year. The past may fill some hearts with fear ; unless we strive we may be quite certain that the next year will be worse still. Even at the very best, suppose some can look back and honestly thank God that the last has been the best year they have ever spent, if this next were to be their final year on earth, would they not wish it to be better still ? Surely no one would be content to say, " I stake my claim to heaven on this last year." We could all find plenty to improve on if we knew for sure that it was our last. Is it not enough, my dear brethren, not to know but what it may be our last ? Then let us be in earnest lest it happen to be the end.

There are two grave mistakes, one or the other of which is frequently made. Delay, putting amendment off to another year, is the first great danger. It makes so little of God's warnings ; it is most insulting to His Divine Majesty. " What manner of people ought you to be in holy conversation and godliness, looking for

and hasting unto the coming of the day of the Lord"? Delaying is such a callous offence. Our Blessed Lord does not want death to overtake us in our sins ; He has warned us that at the hour we think not the Son of man will come. And yet men delay. Men have always done it. St. Peter says the same thing : "The Lord dealeth patiently for your sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance. But the day of the Lord shall come as a thief." (2 Pet. iii. 9, 10.)

The second mistake is to think that we can make the desired improvement of ourselves by our own powers. When we have found year follow year and no improvement, but perhaps steadily growing worse, and yet we had seemed to try, it was all this mistake trusting to ourselves.

The wise thing to do is humbly to pray to God to give us the goodwill to start, and the power to go on and accomplish. We know what we need from the review of our sins and of God's graces, used and abused. Both the goodwill and the accomplishing come from God. Let us ask these graces so that we may start the New Year well, and may we at the end, please God, be able to look back and see that we have made good use of these graces—the goodwill to start, the power and energy to accomplish.

The First Sunday after Epiphany

THE HOLY FAMILY

"Can anything of good come from Nazareth?"—JOHN i. 46.

1. The best plan upon which to model our life must be that of the Holy Family.
2. And that is a thirty-years example of obedience, poverty, and labour.
3. A seeming failure at the time to teach us to endure patiently.
4. But those in heaven through imitating it tell us of its success.

ON what plan of life, my dear brethren, can we more wisely fashion our own than on the life of the Holy Family? And yet our worldly wisdom and our common sense feel it difficult to agree to this when we study and realize what that life was—a thorough self-effacement. "He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them." (Luke ii. 51.) Nazareth, a commonplace, contemptible little village, with no history, not even a Hebrew name of its own, for the Greek traders gave it its name of Nazareth. And the character it bore is evidenced from the text—"Can anything good come from Nazareth?" as Nathaniel said to Philip. And yet here it was that Joseph settled when he brought the Child and its Mother from their exile in Egypt. Here

it was that the Light of the world was hidden until He was thirty years of age.

Our life to be modelled on that of the Holy Family ? If so, let us overcome ourselves, and embrace and choose for our lot obedience, poverty, and labour. We can be quite sure that our Blessed Lord made the best and wisest use of every hour of His short life of three-and-thirty years. He came to redeem the world, to teach it the way to heaven, to win the hearts of men, and yet until He was thirty He lived the hidden life of Nazareth. He gave us this long, weary, patient example, not sparing either His Mother or St. Joseph, because the most of the lives of men are spent in obedience, in poverty, and in labour.

Most men have to obey a master of some kind, to submit to the circumstances of life, and for the most part against their will and murmuring at the decrees of Fate. Most men feel the pinch of poverty, or at least are dissatisfied, and want more than they have. All men, by the ordinance of God, have to labour with their brains or their hands. Often there is failure after all their work ; always a poor reward, a scanty wage for their labour and toil.

Thanks be to God, all this is changed at once if we imitate the Holy Family. Perfect peace and contentment dwelt in that little home. They were fulfilling the Holy Will of God. Obedience transforms our lives. We know we are doing right when we obey ; we know that we shall be rewarded if we obey ; we know that it is not the things we do, but the why we do them—obedience—that makes them acceptable in the eyes of God. What a happy, contented, peaceful world this would be if mankind only understood obedience !

And poverty was no dreaded guest in the home at Nazareth. From the very beginning, from the stable of Bethlehem, our Lord had chosen poverty for Himself. Joseph was content with it, and to be poor never ruffled the placid peace of the Virgin-Mother's soul. For what value could they set on the goods of this world, whose hearts were full of God? Poverty ruled at Nazareth that we might learn that we are pilgrims here; our home is in heaven. But not for a moment must we think that the poverty was not real, was not felt by the Holy Family. They had to battle with it as other poor people have, and hence theirs was a life of labour.

A life of labour. Joseph was the village carpenter, and when the Child was old enough He too would help, and thought it no shame, no disgrace. No, He blessed and sanctified labour for all poor toilers hereafter. He Who had created all things at a word toiled laboriously, fashioning wood into some useful shape. The world was waiting to be converted; men's souls hungering for the Word of Truth; the sick and the afflicted longing to be cured; but Jesus made no sign, but patiently laboured in poverty and obedience.

All this for thirty years to teach us by good example. What a seeming failure it all was! For what was Nazareth after all the example of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph? It is no conjecture, but the plain words of St. Luke that sadden and amaze us. Shortly after the commencement of the public life of our Lord the Gospel tells us: "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, and the fame of Him went out into the whole country. And He taught in the synagogues, and was magnified by all. And He came to Nazareth, where He was brought up: and He went

into the synagogue according to His custom on the Sabbath day; and He rose up to read, and the Book of Isaias the prophet was delivered unto Him. And as He unfolded the book, He found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, wherefore He hath anointed Me, to preach the Gospel to the poor He hath sent Me, to heal the contrite of heart. . . . This day is fulfilled this Scripture in your ears.' 'Is not this the son of Joseph?' they cried. . . . 'And all in the synagogue were filled with anger. And they rose up and thrust Him out of the city: and they brought Him to the brow of the hill, whereon their city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong." (Luke iv. 14-29.)

And was this the result of the good example of the Holy Family for so many years? Surely those people well deserved the character, "Can anything of good come from Nazareth?"

But do not be tempted to think that the example of the Holy Family, teaching us obedience, poverty, and labour, was a failure. Look up and see heaven peopled by those who have taken that example to heart and been faithful to it. That example is living still, and is brought before us by the Church to teach us and encourage us. The surest way to heaven is to imitate the Holy Family. Their life was so perfect and so acceptable to the Almighty Father in heaven that the very home where they dwelt was sacred. When Palestine fell into the hands of unbelievers the house of Nazareth was miraculously transported, and finally deposited at Loretto, in Italy. With a cathedral built over it as a shrine, there the humble abode of Mary still stands, breathing the perfume of the sacred example of the Holy Family, firing the hearts of devout pilgrims,

who in thousands frequent it; and its memory tells us how God loves obedience, poverty, and labour in this world, and blesses and exalts them for ever in the next. Oh yes, something good has come from Nazareth—the example of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

The Second Sunday after Epiphany

THE MOST HOLY NAME OF JESUS

"If you shall ask Me anything in My Name, that I will do."—JOHN xiv. 14.

1. The power that prayer has always had with God.
2. How much more the prayers "through Jesus Christ our Lord"!
3. The promise attached to prayer in the name of Jesus.
4. What mistake do we make? We pray for things that cannot be granted in that Name.
5. But our every hope can be fulfilled, if we pray for that which honours Jesus to grant.

PRAYER has always been blessed by God, my dear brethren, with a wonderful power. In the Old Testament we read numerous cases of God's mercy being, as it were, extorted from Him by prayer. And those were the days of smiting the sinner and avenging an insult to the Almighty, and not the days of mercy.

You remember how the prayer of Moses appeased the wrath of God. "The Lord said to Moses, Let Me alone, that My wrath may be kindled against them, and that I may destroy them. . . . But Moses besought the Lord His God, saying . . . Let Thy anger cease, and be appeased upon the wickedness of Thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Thy servants. . . . And the Lord was appeased from doing the evil which He had spoken against His people." (Exod.

xxxii. 9-14.) And again the Lord said, "This word also, which thou hast spoken, will I do; for thou hast found grace before Me" (Exod. v. 17); and the prayer of Moses was heard.

If, then, the prayers of Moses, Isaias, Daniel, and David could pierce the heavens, could appease God's anger, could win forgiveness and mercy, what confidence should we have in prayers that we are taught to say "through Jesus Christ our Lord"! What a treasure we have in that sacred Name, in which we are taught to pray: "For there is no other Name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts iv. 12.)

Let us study and try to realize what a grace and power that Sacred Name is to us. Attached to it is that solemn pledge and promise of our Lord: "If you shall ask Me anything in My Name, that I will do." That promise was not lightly made, but was uttered by the God of Truth and Wisdom and Power, made Man for our sakes. To each of us that promise holds good, and He means it. He has the power to fulfil it, and He is anxious to be taken at His Word. Where, then, is the faith and hope and love that such a promise should enkindle in our hearts? There is something shamefully wrong about us if there is no earnest response on our part. Is there some limit to the promise, or some hard condition in its fulfilment that takes away the liberality and splendour of the offer? "If you ask Me anything, that I will do."

Oh yes, my brethren, I have omitted those words, "in My Name." We are so taken up with pleasure, greed, and love—that is not the love of God—that we have little room in our hearts for aught else. "For all seek the things that are their own; not the things

that are Jesus Christ's." (Phil. ii. 21.) We cannot ask in His Name for continuance of worldly pleasures, of forgetfulness of our Creator. We cannot ask in His Name for more money that our greed and selfishness may be satisfied, for He chose poverty as a friend, and bade us beware of money. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God." (Mark x. 23.) We cannot ask in His Name for continuance and prosperity of love that is not His, for love that distracts us from His love, for love that usurps the heart that should be His, for love that defiles the soul that has been given to Him in Baptism and Holy Communion!

"These are thy gods, O Israel!" (Exod. xxxii. 4.) Pleasure, greed, love are the gods that most men are satisfied with in this life, and the promise of Jesus Christ is no use to such as these. Oh, how humiliating for us, my dear brethren, if, looking into our hearts, we find there is something else ruling there, and not the Name of Jesus Christ.

But, on the other hand, to the humble and contrite, to those who are striving to make up for the past and live clean lives now, what a treasure is that Sacred Name and promise: "If you shall ask Me anything in My Name, that I will do."

We can come in our sins to the foot of the cross and plead for mercy in His Name, and contrition will fill our hearts, lead us to Confession, and the Precious Blood will wash away our iniquities. We can approach Him, and tell the Master how we are faring in the struggle against our enemies, and we can ask in His Name for loyalty, that we may not prove traitors to Him; and that day, again, we shall have strength to persevere. And when He bids us "Take up the cross

and follow Me"; when poverty, hardship, false friendship, or the shadow of death oppress us, we may feel it hard, our lips may almost falter a murmur against Almighty God, but the good habit of invoking the Holy Name will come to our rescue, and resignation and strength to offer ourselves to do His Will will be given to us because we have asked it in His Name.

And the inexhaustible treasures of this legacy of the Holy Name, that has been bequeathed to us, are such that we can enrich our friends with it as well. What can be prayed for with more confidence in the Saviour's Name than the salvation of souls? Then let us ask in that Sacred Name for the salvation of our friends, and of those who are dear to us. Let us pray for the young and innocent that they may persevere. Let us pray for some poor friend whom we know "went away wandering in his own heart" (Isa. lvii. 17), that he may return to the service of God. Let us pray each day for the dying, that they may repent and receive the Sacraments, and have the grace to invoke the Holy Name Jesus in their last hour.

And if there is one thing that our Lord will do more than another, it is to listen to us as we pray for the souls in Purgatory. The very mention of that Sacred Name Jesus will fall sweetly on their ears, and how grateful they will be that it is invoked on their behalf! Oh that we ourselves may become as frequent and devout in invoking it, trustful in its power, grateful for its having been given to us, as the Holy Souls would be if they were once again on earth! "If you shall ask Me anything in My Name, I will do it."

The Third Sunday after Epiphany

TEPIDITY

"Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy."—MATT. viii. 6.

1. Palsy the type of tepidity.
2. Tepidity: cause, growth, effects.
3. How to shake off tepidity: remember—
   The honour of serving God;
   The eternal reward;
   The necessity to begin at once and to break with sin.
4. Humility and faith (as did the centurion's) will bring Christ to come and cure us.

As leprosy is frequently, my dear brethren, spoken of as the figure and type of sin, so palsy represents tepidity. As the man afflicted with the palsy lieth at home powerless of limb, unable to move, dependent on friends for food and comfort, so the tepid man is sluggish in the service of God, useless, and at a standstill in virtuous work and all that concerns his salvation. It is the opposite to the fervour of Divine love. Tepidity is a languid and miserable dejection, which causes a man to have no zest in prayer, or in any spiritual or virtuous exercise.

Tepidity commonly arises from sloth, which is fed on idle leisure; has a repugnance towards and curtails anything, prayer or services, which is for God; flies self-denial, hates work, but loves comfort, self-indul-

gence, and the good things of life. So to the tepid spiritual and Divine things have no savour, and even become loathsome, but foolish and vain things are a delight. Spiritual bread begets a loathing, sinful poison, so it is pleasant, a craving.

And the growth of tepidity is rapid, though insidious and unnoticed. The palsied man, lying useless, makes no note, day after day, that his limbs grow more powerless; that movement is more and more an impossibility; that each day he might be called more truly a living corpse.

Death is a release to the palsied, but there is no release for tepidity, uncured and unchecked. Its effects are mortal sin, an evil life, repentance put off time after time, callousness to sin, and a bad death, when God's patience is worn out. St. Jerome says: "Through tepidity man loses all the gifts of graces and Divine love, is saturated with vice, loses his time—the time for repentance—becomes the sport of the devil, and is eternally lost."

It is in our very nature to be tainted with this vice. And its growth is so imperceptible, its effects such utter ruin, that it is of the most urgent necessity that we do our utmost to free our souls from this spiritual palsy. Let us cast off this accursed vice, and become prompt, strenuous, and fervent in the service of God before it is too late.

To enable us to do this, remember the honour and privilege it is to be called on to serve God. A soldier does not regard the hardships, the danger to life and limb, when chosen for some heroic task, but the glory and honour of having been chosen, and the still greater glory if he is successful.

Miserable creature comforts, paltry pleasures, satisfy,

or, rather, pretend to satisfy, a tepid man in this life, and he forgets to lift up his eyes and see the eternal reward awaiting those who obey the Church, practise virtue, and are earnest in every good work for the sake of their Divine Master. "For I reckon," says St. Paul, "that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come." (Rom. viii. 18.) Oh the joy and eternal glory rewarding the light, the short labours of this life!

And remember, above all, the necessity to begin at once. Do not plan for the future, but lay your hand to any good work waiting for you. Begin, and begin strenuously; do not fear, do not delay. Remember how abundantly and lovingly God comes to the help of those who call upon Him, and seek Him with all their hearts. Implore His aid; begin, like men, at once, lest, delaying, you sin afresh and perish. "Know ye that no one hath hoped in the Lord and hath been confounded. For who hath continued in His commandment and hath been forsaken, or who hath called upon Him and He despised him? . . . They that fear the Lord will seek after the things that are well pleasing to Him." (Eccles. ii. 11, 12, 19.)

And, lastly, break with sin, guarding against even small and habitual falls. They lead, if carelessly indulged in, to mortal sin. And after being warned and forgiven by God so often, even one more mortal sin, the outcome of tepidity once again, might anger God so much that death might be allowed to overtake us. And death in even one mortal sin is eternal ruin.

If tepidity is spiritual palsy, and we are powerless to move and cannot go to Christ, who is the good friend, the centurion, who will go and bring Him to us? The centurion did not ask our Blessed Lord to

come to his servant, and expressed his unworthiness when our Lord had said : " I will come and heal him." The centurion, then, is the embodiment of humility and faith. These are the graces we need, and then we shall be cured of tepidity. Humility arising from the knowledge of our sad state. Helpless, powerless of ourselves, waiting hour after hour for the approach of death, surely we can be humble and cry for mercy. " This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him " (Ps. xxxiii. 7). And faith we need—faith in the goodness and willingness of our Blessed Saviour. " I will come and heal him." It all depends on our faith. " As thou hast believed, so be it done to thee." O Lord, there is urgency in our request. The sight of the past fills us with fear. Years we have spent idly, uselessly, languishing in tepidity. How short the future may be, we know not. We cannot trust to it. It is now at once that we must turn to Thee, and in all humility and faith pray Thee to come and heal us. Bid us arise, and with new strength and zeal give ourselves to Thy service and persevere to the end.

The Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

VIGILANCE

"Let him take heed lest he fall."—1 Cor. x. 12.

1. Why have we to take heed?
   Because past falls have taught us fear;
   Because we have enemies;
   Because of the consequences of falling again.
2. And if we resolve to take heed, we must turn to God in prayer and with confidence.
3. And God is faithful: strengthens the heart to sustain and overcome.

When St. Paul, my dear brethren, says, "But with the most of them God was not well pleased," in one word he gives us the most cogent reason why we must take heed, and great heed, lest we fall. Most men do fall. We must be of the few that do their utmost not to fall. And he mentions their crimes—covetousness, idolatry, fornication, tempting Christ, murmuring, which brought destruction upon them. Bidding us beware, he adds: "These things were written for our correction. . . . Wherefore, he that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall."

We see, then, why we have to take heed. It is not only through the warning of St. Paul, but past falls of our own and of others have taught us fear. Yes, we have seen others fall away, who were

once far more strict and fervent than we have been. And it humbles us now to think of them—not in any uncharitable spirit, but in fear and in our prayers. How has it happened ? They did not take heed, and they fell ! Such seemingly little things occasion great disasters. The waves incessantly wash away the earth at the foot of the cliff—for years, it may be—when suddenly some stormy night thousands of tons of rock crash down into the sea. Why ? Their foundation had been undermined, lapped away by the waves imperceptibly. Others have come to ruin thus, and we must watch ourselves. When we have once fallen, there is a greater chance to fall again, so the past should whisper humility and fear to our souls, and bid us take heed.

A second reason bids us be vigilant—that is, because we have enemies. Snares and temptations beset our footsteps, and shall we walk heedlessly and blindly, or not rather warily watch every footstep for fear of a lurking danger ? If they are crafty, must we not be vigilant and crafty too ? Yes, alert we must be, and armed as well, for our foes are stronger than ourselves. Prayer is our weapon, and the name of the Lord our defence. "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear ? The Lord is the protector of my life : of whom shall I be afraid ?" (Ps. xxvi. 1, 2.) "The Lord is my helper and my protector : in Him hath my heart confided, and I have been helped." (Ps. xxvii. 7.)

The last reason that bids us take heed is the dread of the consequences of falling again. What may not the next fall into grievous sin bring upon us ? It may be the last sin in our lifetime. We may never have the grace to pray or repent again. Death may be at

the door waiting to claim us. Even if not so close to the end, we know that mortal sin subjects us to the power of the devil; that we are helpless to free ourselves; that all our hopes are in Him Whom once again, deliberately, wilfully, we have just offended and outraged. Let us take heed, lest we risk our souls again.

Yes, let us resolve to take heed, and turn to God now, and not wait till we have fallen again. Let love and humility bring us to His feet, and not the servile fear of everlasting punishment. "Know ye that no one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded. For who hath continued in His commandment and hath been forsaken? or who hath called upon Him and He despised him? For God is compassionate and merciful, and will forgive sins in the day of tribulation, and He is a protector to all that seek Him in truth." (Eccles. ii. 11-13.) Anyone who resolves to take heed can trust in the infinite goodness of God and take courage. Daily prayer and confidence will win from God all the help we need. God loves to be overcome by prayer, and often He delays His answer to make us pray the more; but when the answer does come, it repays us a thousand times for the prayers we have persevered in. And pray with confidence, nothing doubting, for God wants us to be valiant soldiers in His service. "Ask in faith, nothing wavering." (Jas. i. 6.) The hardship of the vigilance required is that it has to be daily and hourly, and for that we require God's constant help and grace. Many can make a great effort now and again, but to be always taking heed, always on the watch, wears away the strongest resolution and determination. We could not do it of ourselves; we need the constant help and

grace of God. And He will not be wanting. "Casting all your care upon Him, for He hath care of you," says St. Peter (1 Pet. v. 7); and David bids us "Cast thy care upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee." (Ps. liv. 23.) Take these words with full faith and confidence. We do not trust in ourselves, but in the power and goodness of God. Temptations will come, the enemy will scheme, ourselves sometimes grow weary in well-doing, but we must not give up our prayers or lose our confidence in God.

"And God is faithful," and will strengthen us to sustain and to overcome. St. Paul encourages us: "God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able." (1 Cor. x. 13.) And St. James adds: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been proved he shall receive the crown of life, which God has promised to them that love Him." (Jas. i. 12.)

Yes, my dear brethren, watchfulness and vigilance are required if we would save our souls. We cannot go by others, for "with the most of them God was not well pleased." Constant heeding is an undertaking beyond our strength, but in prayer and confidence we have the means to secure the help of God. God never deserts those who trust in Him. God is faithful. He is our Father, we are His children, and as children let us cast all our care upon Him, and He will have care of us.

The Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

MERCY

"Bearing with one another, forgiving one another."—Col. iii. 13.

1. Mercy proved by good deeds.
2. The troubles of life force us to be either—
   Sinful or merciful; that is, patient, forgiving;
   Helping; remembering the poor and the sick.
3. Our mercy to others pleads to God for mercy for ourselves. Example of S. Nicephorus, M.
4. A Christ-like virtue.

We may well doubt if mercy dwells in our hearts unless we find it breaking forth into good deeds—"bearing with one another, forgiving one another." Patience, forgiveness, kindliness, practical charitableness, all spring from the spirit of mercy.

In this life we have much to put up with. It is in the designs of God that we should have. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ." (Gal. vi. 2.) The defects, the shortcomings of others irritate and annoy us out of all proportion to their cause, on account of our own self-love. And they are so constantly recurring that they create a sore by continued friction that seems impossible from so trifling a cause. These objectionable worries we have to put up with kindly and charitably, as we would have God to suffer us. If, without an effort

or a prayer to control ourselves, we give way and become harsh, angry, contemptuous, censorious, ready to pick a quarrel on the slightest provocation, are we children of God and followers of Christ? Where is the supernatural in our lives? Where is that which is meriting eternal life? What a contrast are we to the long-suffering and patient Redeemer! If God were as harsh and as easily provoked by us, where should we be? Whereas, on the other hand, if, in spite of many and constant failures, we endeavour to be patient and bear each other's burdens, we are fulfilling the law of Christ.

Not only have we to overcome our dislikes, but daily have we to forgive. How can we say the "Our Father" unless we do? "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." Every offence against us is not intended, for we are so quick to imagine slights and take offence; but still daily, we may say, there are complaints, offences, injuries, slights, one against the other. And let us remember that we are as objectionable, and perhaps much more objectionable, to others than they are to ourselves. And as our Blessed Saviour indulgently and times without number forgives us, so we must forgive our neighbour. St. Paul bids us have "mercy, benignity, humility, modesty, patience; bearing with one another, forgiving one another. Even as the Lord hath forgiven you, so you also." (Col. iii. 12, 13.) Continually, however, we hear from Catholics, and from people who think themselves good Catholics, "Oh, we cannot! It is every day and every hour, and no one has such annoyances as we have!" Where is the spirit of mercy in such a heart?

Practice makes perfect, and therefore Almighty God allows these daily and hourly troubles to annoy us,

that by daily and hourly passing over slights and affronts, and returning a kindly word for an ill-natured one, we exercise our mercy, humility, and patience, and so make it a virtue, a pious habit, pleasing unto God and worthy of God's reward.

A splendid way of acquiring such a habit is remembering and visiting the poor and the sick and helping others. In the first place, we shall find those who have something to murmur at, as the world would say, far more contented and grateful to God than we are. Their great trials and sufferings will make us ashamed to notice our own petty troubles, and their thankfulness for little favours and blessing God for His goodness will make us blush for our querulousness and murmurings.

In fulfilling this obligation, which we cannot ignore, of helping our neighbour we fulfil the law of charity, we bring to our own souls a sweetness and a peace that savour of God. And how easily a little help is given! A kind word, a short visit, even a look of sympathy and the friendly pressure of a hand-clasp, a prayer with those in sorrow or distress—angels note it all, and that little act of mercy will return and find us and bless us when most we need it. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." (Matt. v. 7.) "A merciful man doth good to his own soul." (Prov. xi. 17.)

Our mercy to others most efficaciously pleads to God for mercy for ourselves. It is a compact between poor sinners and the good God. Transpose the words, "Even as the Lord hath forgiven you, so you also," and make the Epistle say quite truly, "Even as you have forgiven others, so God also will forgive you."

There is an example that happened in the days of fervour, when men were brave and staunch and glad

to die for the name of Christ. There was a certain priest, a strict and earnest man, but who had forgotten the lesson that we are trying to learn to-day. He was not merciful and forgiving. He was brought before the judge, and when accused, spoke boldly of his Master, Jesus Christ. He was condemned to death, and went forth unflinchingly to his martyrdom. But in his heart there was this one sad fault : he had taken offence at a certain man, and would not forgive him. This poor man, hearing that the priest was to be put to death, ran in tears to meet him, and falling at his feet, besought his forgiveness ere he died for Christ. Can you believe it ? The priest refused, and with unkind upbraidings passed on ; and his poor friend followed sorrowfully, beseeching for one kind word. They arrived where the martyr's crown was waiting—the place of execution—but that wretched priest saw not the crown, but the instruments of torture. His soul turned craven, he abjured his faith, denied Jesus Christ, and saved his miserable life. Horror-stricken, his friend came boldly forth, professed himself a Christian, and died in his stead. Thus he gained God's forgiveness and the martyr's crown, which the priest had lost. That grace was wanting to him because he had no mercy and could not forgive.

Especially is mercy a Christ-like virtue. The law of Christ is a law of love and pity ; and the life of Christ and the death of Christ, how nobly did they fulfil His law ! Let us imitate our Saviour, and make sure of heaven. Remember what St. Ambrose says : "I do not believe anyone has perished who lovingly in life practised the works of mercy ; for he has many, so many, good deeds interceding for him, and it is impossible for the prayers of so many not to be heard."

The Sixth Sunday after Epiphany

THE FORGOTTEN DEAD

"Making a remembrance of you in our prayers without ceasing."—1 THESS. i. 2.

1. Is this true of us? Yet it is a duty.
2. A bad sign to forget the dead; we shall be forgotten ourselves.
3. Whereas remembrance of them is an act of mercy, a prayer pleasing to God, a plea for ourselves, a preparation for heaven.

FEW of us, my dear brethren, realize the power we possess of doing good one to another by our prayers, and yet in the Holy Scriptures and the lives of the Saints there are countless instances of even miracles being worked by the prayers of a good man. Even in our own day, how many conversions, graces, happy deaths are the result of good friends' prayers one for another!

But if charity demands that we pray for those who, if they wished, could pray for themselves, how much more does the love of our neighbour press us to pray for the dead? Do not those who are helpless need our pity and succour all the more? Are the souls of our deceased friends, who are now in Purgatory, grateful to us for remembering them without ceasing in our prayers, or are they crying out with Job, "My

kinsmen have forsaken me, and they that knew me have forgotten me"? (Job xix. 14.)

To pray for the dead is a duty. Charity demands it, justice demands it, the glory and honour of God demand it; and is not that the very object of our existence in this world? My dear brethren, let us not forget the dead. It is a very bad sign, from which we can surely tell the state of our souls. If we soon and easily forget the dead—those who were near and dear to us, and have claims upon our love—it shows unmistakably that we are not spiritual-minded. It shows that we think very little of heaven, have no longing for it; that the gaining heaven is not a motive urging us on to strenuous endeavour.

It is a bad sign, for it shows that we think very little of sin and the punishment of sin, which is keeping our poor friends from the blessed vision of God. It is a bad sign, for as we have done to them it will be done unto us, and we, too, shall be forgotten in our sad and weary sojourning in that place of punishment. We acknowledge all this is true, and all our feeble excuse is—We forgot! An insult, and not an excuse. Our present life, its joys and cares, leave little leisure for piety; "out of sight, out of mind," is so true, and the souls in Purgatory know it well: "They that knew me have forgotten me."

Whereas "remembrance of them in our prayers without ceasing" is a blessed thing indeed; for, first, it is an act of mercy to them. Their own time for mercy is over, and God's justice is exacting the payment of their debt; but we are privileged, poor sinners though we may be, to bring mercy to them instead. Prayers, alms, sacrifices, good deeds, sufferings, may be offered up to God for them, and He most graciously

accepts them on their behalf. "Betaking themselves to prayers, they besought Him that the sin which had been committed might be forgiven . . . and sacrifice be offered for the sins of the dead. . . . It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins." (2 Mach. xii. 42-46.)

Moreover, these prayers are pleasing indeed to God, for they bring about that for which He is longing—the hastening of those souls to heaven. Can it be possible that the good God, Who is love itself, will not place a double value on these prayers, and accept them as pleading for our own sanctification as well? A prayer for the suffering souls blesses them and blesses us who offer it. And could this pious practice of constant praying for the dead be continued by one living in sin? My dear brethren, this holy practice must purify our souls; sinfulness and itself cannot find a resting-place in the one same heart. Therefore, perseverance in prayer for them fits us to be with them. The more we shall pray, the less we shall sin. The more remembrance we shall have of them, the less the hold that the world and its sinful pleasures will have upon our hearts.

This life and this world to most of us is almost a continued series of disappointments. And why? To teach us that this is not a lasting home, that our souls are meant for heaven. We should, therefore, thank God each time that this world proves itself to us a fraud and a failure. And remembrance of the holy souls in constant prayer is the surest and easiest means of despising this world and looking for our home in heaven. Busied in securing our friends' and brethren's entrance there, can we fail to realize that we are one

of God's children, too? Our heart will beat with a new delight when we say "Our Father, Who art in heaven."

Let us do our utmost to acquire this holy habit. "Making a remembrance of you all without ceasing." Each day will strengthen us to pray the more devoutly the next day. God will reckon up all the good we shall effect, and the souls themselves, whose entrance into heaven we shall have hastened, will show their gratitude by befriending us through life. And we ourselves, filled with the blessing and peace of God, will live more and more each day in the remembrance, and longing for, and the contemplated joys of heaven.

Septuagesima

NECESSITY OF EARNESTNESS

"And every one that striveth for the mastery."—1 Cor. ix. 25.

1. St. Paul bids us learn from worldly things, and contrasts them with spiritual.
2. We may not be spectators only.
3. Do we take the gaining heaven seriously?
4. Success of others should encourage us.
5. But the Master, Who calls us, is the great encouragement.

St. Paul appeals to what his hearers were interested in and knew so well—the very games and sports in which they excelled. The fame of the Corinthian games has come down to our own day. And if on earth the Apostle made this appeal, would he not do so now, and bid you learn the necessity of earnestness, of being fit and strenuous, from the world and its pleasures and its sports?

See what athletes have to do, and for what. They train, practise, develop their powers—yea, every sinew, to its utmost. In training they have to refrain from luxuries; in practising, to be obedient to routine, and to ignore fatigue—to endure hardships, and risk even injuries. Their whole aim, every thought and interest, all are centred on winning, on success, applause, a name, the pride of place.

Contrast them with ourselves. Their strenuous lives shame us. We have to strive for the mastery in stern reality, not only over friendly rivals and competitors, but over the powers of darkness, the allurements of the world, our own sinful selves. If they do not win, no harm is done; they can try again. If we do not obtain the mastery, we are ruined for ever. If they, on the other hand, do win, what is it? As St. Paul says: "A corruptible crown." And only one can win, only one can be first in their case. In ours there is no uncertainty; we can each and all win the crown of eternal life.

It will not do to be spectators merely in the game of life, but every one of us has to strive for the mastery. Are we doing so? Take the average Catholic. Daily prayers, short and perfunctory; Sunday's Mass, one without a sermon by preference, unless too early; Confession and Holy Communion at rare intervals, which interval is growing longer year by year; almsdeeds—a very little margin in their income for that; fasting, quite out of the question, and not a thought that something else should take its place, for mortification and penance are necessary; submission to the Holy Will of God. Oh no! little room does providence find for itself amidst the schemes and selfishness and push of modern life; avoiding bad company, dangerous occasions, guarding against temptations—oh, one cannot be singular and make oneself a hermit, but at least one is no worse than others! Perhaps this little picture of an average Catholic might do for a sketch of some of us.

My dear brethren, where is the striving for the mastery in a life like this? Where is there any endeavour, any real effort at all? Remember the words

of Holy Scripture : " The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away." (Matt. xi. 12.) And again : " He that striveth for the mastery refraineth himself from all things." We stand convicted. Is there one of us that could mention anything he does for heaven which is worthy of being called an effort, a manly, sustained effort ?

The fault is that we do not take the gaining heaven seriously. And yet it should be the one and only object and endeavour of our lives. There are strong, unpleasant words of St. Paul that must influence our lives before we can dare to say that we are really trying for heaven—words such as these : " So run that you may obtain " ; " Strive for the mastery " ; " Refrain from all things " ; " I so fight " ; " and chastise my body and bring it into subjection." These are quotations from the epistle of the day. Are we doing anything that could be called one of these injunctions ? If we do believe in heaven, and that we have to work and fight our way there, what a cowardly, contemptible life we are leading !

It is not a forlorn hope on which we have to set out, not something that is a mere chance, not something beyond the powers of God's grace that is so freely bestowed upon us. Let us pray to God to give us the courage to make a manful endeavour.

Look at the encouragements that should urge us to do our best. The success of others gone before us nerves us to be bold and daring. If so in this world, in its enterprises, sports, explorations, battles, how much more so for us when faith bids us look up and behold the glorious example of the Saints, who strove for the mastery as we have to do—the Saints, who overcame themselves and brought their bodies into

subjection ; who despised the enticements and pleasures of the world, which would fain have decoyed them from the way to heaven ; who battled against the evil spirits, the tempters, by prayer, the Sacraments, and a pure intention. Blessed example of the Saints that urges us to begin and strengthens us in the struggle !

But a greater encouragement still is this : we serve a Master Who, when He bids us do a thing, can give us the goodwill to attempt it and the strength to accomplish it. He is ready to bestow them, He is longing to bestow them ; He is only waiting to be asked !

Ashamed of the past, with its want of energy and effort ; ashamed of the past, in which we have wasted God's time and God's graces, let us fall at the feet of our Lord, and ask Him for keen faith to see what is required of us, the courage and strength to strive, the perseverance to continue the struggle till we achieve the victory, the victory that will last for ever.

Sexagesima

THE WORD OF GOD

"The seed is the word of God."—LUKE viii. 11.

1. The parable and the explanation both our Lord's.
2. Christ's divisions:
   Those by the wayside;
   Those upon the rock;
   Those amongst thorns;
   Those upon good ground.
3. How many receive the word, how few bear fruit. Amongst which are we?

ON other Sundays, my dear brethren, you may sit in judgment on the preacher, object to his arguments, doubt his correctness, or grudgingly own that he is right; but to-day our Blessed Lord not only speaks the parable, but actually explains it. So we are all taught the lesson to-day, and no one can escape knowing what God means and what we are bound to accept.

Our Lord was sitting in the boat, and a very great multitude crowded the banks. (Mark iv. 1.) Behind them, on the gentle slope of the hill-side, there was doubtless taking place that to which our Lord called their attention. "Behold, the sower went out to sow." And it was all just as our Blessed Lord said. The sower, passing along, would skirt the pathway; and on the undulating ground boulders of rock would jut

out here and there, hollows full of thorns and nettles would be found, and these got their share of the seed, as well as the good and fertile soil.

And afterwards, when He was alone, the twelve that were with Him asked Him what the parable might mean. And the Lord of truth and wisdom explained it. The parable is this : The seed is the word of God. My dear brethren, we know without being told that the Sower was none other than Christ our Lord Himself. And from His own lips we learn that, out of four classes of men who listened to Him, in one only did His preaching bear fruit.

And our Blessed Lord explained the divisions separately. " They by the wayside are they that hear ; then the devil cometh and taketh the word out of their heart, lest believing they should be saved." In St. Matthew it says : " And whilst he soweth some fell by the wayside, and the birds of the air came and ate them up." Where there is no caring, watching over, safeguarding the word of God it is lost, as this seed by the wayside. The devil comes on the alert to snatch the word from him, lest a good beginning should be made. He does not want it to be remembered, practised, put into execution, lest believing they should be saved.

Now they upon the rock are they who, when they hear, receive the word with joy, and these have no roots. There was not much earth, and they sprung up immediately ; and they were scorched by the heat of the sun, and because they had no roots they withered away. They believe for awhile, and in time of temptation they fall away. In these there was feeling, sentiment, but no depth of character. They fall away, decoyed by their carnal desires, the vanities of the

world, or the suggestions of the devil. They give up what they had begun so well. They abandon God, they consent to temptation. Were not many of the Jews themselves like this? They received our Lord with joy in their various cities, they heard His word, they crowded after Him; but at the time of His Passion, how they all fell away! When tribulation and persecution arose they were presently scandalized.

And that which fell among thorns! My dear brethren, remember it is our Blessed Lord Who explains this. If it were anyone else, what an outcry there would be! How can pleasures and riches and cares of this life be likened to thorns? Choose either St. Mark's or St. Luke's words. The one says: "These are they who hear the word, and the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts after other things entering in choke the word, and it is made fruitless." (Mark iv. 18, 19.) And St. Luke puts it: "And that which fell among thorns are they who have heard, and going their way are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and yield no fruit." Alas! the word of God in our heart is smothered by superfluous cares, and the immoderate love of riches, and the pleasures of this life. "For they that will become rich fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men into destruction and perdition." (1 Tim. vi. 9.) "Go not after thy lusts, but turn away from thy own will. If thou give to thy soul her desires, she will make thee a joy to thy enemies." (Eccles. xviii. 30, 31.) Whether we look back to history, or look around us in our own days, countless are the examples we see of the truth of all this—religion, God's service, the Holy Faith,

all choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of this life.

"But that on the good ground are they who in a good and very good heart, hearing the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit in patience." Let us resolve to belong to this one class. The rest all wasted and lost the word of God. Our duty is first to hear it. The more we hear it the more our hearts will be drawn towards it and improved by it. A good heart by natural dispositions, a very good heart by the grace of God. Hear the word and keep it. Keep it—yes, in memory, and keep it by obedience. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." (Jas. i. 22.) "Thy words have I hidden in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee." (Ps. cxviii. 11.) Keep the word of God, and it is a safeguard to us; keep the word of God, and it directs us on our way; keep the word of God, and the strength of obedience is imparted to us that we may go on day by day and keep the sacred word more and more. But fervour and alacrity merely will not suffice, for we bring forth fruit in patience. How many have lost heart in that work of patience! We cannot see the corn growing; God can. We grow weary of our own selves; we seem no better, no nearer heaven than we were years ago. Has the devil plucked the word from our heart? Have there been no roots, and is our religion withered away? Have worldly cares and pleasures choked it? Please God, no. But all our lives we must humbly hear the word, steadfastly keep it, and patiently—yes, so patiently—wait for the hundredfold.

Quinquagesima

DEVOTION TO THE PASSION

"Then Jesus took unto Him the twelve, and said to them: Behold we go up to Jerusalem."—LUKE xviii. 31.

1. How appropriate the Gospel.
2. Remembrance of the Passion gives the tone to Lent.
3. And from it spring gratitude, compassion, and contrition.

How appropriately, my dear brethren, as we stand on the threshold of Lent, is this Gospel read to us to-day! "Then Jesus took unto Him the twelve, and said to them, Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of man. For He shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked and scourged and spit upon; and after they have scourged Him they will put Him to death."

Our Blessed Lord says the same to us, for He would have us mindful of His Sufferings and Death during the holy days of Lent. And in truth the Church may read the Gospel and pastors preach about it, yet how many will be like the Apostles—"they understood not the things that were said." The Apostles then were excusable—Christ had not died then—but we are inexcusable. How many Catholics will remain cold and listless and deaf during Lent, in spite of our

Blessed Saviour's imploring them and longing for them to remember His Passion and Death!

He is worthy of remembrance, and remembrance would give the tone to our devout observance of Lent. If we abstain from food, or drink, or pleasure; if we are more assiduous at our prayers; if we are more exact in attending the services of the Church; if sorrow for our sins is more poignant, and our preparation for Confession more earnest, it all will be because we have kept in remembrance how "He was mocked and scourged and spit upon; and after He was scourged they put Him to death." As the springtime, with its showers and the smile of the sun and mildness of the air, awakens in the earth the seeds and roots, which push their growth to the light and develop their beauty, so the remembrance of the Passion of Jesus Christ awakens in our soul the dormant virtues, and gratitude, compassion, sorrow grow up within us and fill our lives with their fragrance.

Gratitude, which God takes as payment for all that He has done and suffered for us, grows up within our heart. Oh, if we knew how one word of thanks is treasured up by the Sacred Heart, we should not stint our thanksgivings, and a grateful heart sweetens and mellows our own existence! How pleasing to our Blessed Lady, too, is gratitude for those sufferings of which she was the grief-stricken witness! They were endured for our sakes. Mary stood by the Cross pleading for us poor sinners, and willing to adopt us as her children. Oh! should we not, then, be grateful?

And gratitude overflows into compassion, a yearning that we could do something to relieve and alleviate the anguish and suffering of the Redeemer. And we can, for compassion urges us to offer all our own sufferings

and sorrows in union with our Lord's. To lighten His Cross we take up our own humbly and gladly, and bravely press on in His blessed footsteps. Beholding with the eyes of compassion how He was scourged and put to death, we realize how sorrow and regret must wring our heart that our sins have caused our Blessed Lord thus to be mocked and scourged and crucified. Oh, there is the bitterness of grief! We have had a hand in those sufferings. And the more graces we have had, the more cruel the blows that we have struck; and the more frequently we have fallen, the more terrible the stripes that we have inflicted.

The remembrance of the Sufferings of Jesus Christ is the blessed school of humility and contrition. There are others who may seem to be more careless and indifferent than ourselves, but have they been blessed with the graces and opportunities that have been lavished upon us? Have they had the safe home, the careful parents, the good bringing-up, the habits of prayer, attending Mass and the Sacraments? Have they had all the safeguards that we may have had? And in spite of all God's goodness, who can say that he has not sinned against Him? How can we be contrite enough for our sins—the betrayals, denials, insults, and cruelties of our sins? Oh, the heinous malice of the sins of those who have been favoured by God, as most Catholics have been! Which did our Lord feel the most, the hasty blow of the ignorant soldier in the council chamber or the loathsome kiss of Judas the traitor, who had been His chosen friend, who had just come from his first Communion?

Could there be, then, a better and a holier way of spending Lent than to cultivate a tender remembrance of the Sufferings of our Blessed Lord? You will not

draw back with an excuse when the Saviour this day bids you join the Apostles. "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem." The Gospel tells us that He hastened on in front of them (Mark x. 32). His love urging Him on to go and suffer for us. Let us not falter and be reluctant. Let us not begrudge to do a little for Him Who did so much for us. He only asks for remembrance, which grows into gratitude, compassion, and sorrow. And there is one way of thanking Him which delights Him so that He is glad that He suffered and died for us. Go to Holy Communion an extra time; go every week in Lent; go as often as you can. There is the test. It is the spirit of the Church. The holy time of Lent calls for it. There is nothing we can do so pleasing to that Heart that loved us on the Cross. How can you say Him no? Your prayers will falter on your lips as false, as pretence, if you refuse a Holy Communion. There is real remembrance—the remembrance that He asked for—from which spring gratitude, compassion, and sorrow. He only asks for this from us guilty sinners, whereas He, the Lamb of God, was mocked, and scourged, and crucified.

First Sunday of Lent

TEMPTATION

"To be tempted by the devil."—MATT. iv. 1.

1. Our Lord was tempted to teach us what we must expect.
2. Temptation teaches us to be humble; to be manful and striving.
3. God is with us in the battle. Trust in Him.
4. But let us distrust ourselves; we can either be deceived or overcome.
5. The reward dependent on temptations overcome.

To show us, my dear brethren, that no man dare expect to escape temptation in this life our Blessed Lord even allowed Himself to be tempted by the devil. The daring of the Evil One to approach our Lord!

Then why are we tempted? Why is our life to be a struggle and a warfare? First, that we may know ourselves, our weaknesses, our proneness to sin. And the more we know this the more humble we shall be, and humility is the safeguard to our souls. Yet so subtle is the devil that many a time men fancy that he has forgotten them; that they have been good so long that they are safe; that any suggestion of evil would be repelled by them for sure. Beware of such thoughts. This is not the sign of sanctity. "Those who are leading a heavenly life on earth are of all the chief objects of the assaults of Satan. Against them

he harbours bitterest hatred; for them he is each moment laying snares." (Council of Trent.) On the other hand, those who do not feel the assaults of temptation should be humble and fearful. "They possess neither piety, nor charity, nor any virtue worthy of a Christian man, and are hence entirely in the power of the devil, nor need they any temptations to overthrow them." (*Ibid*).

And, secondly, temptations force us to be manful and strive our best. Temptation is not a sin; it is the yielding that is the crime. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation" (Jas. i. 12), who stands on his guard, vigilant, facing the enemy. Is not this life given to us in which to earn eternal life by being humble, striving, faithful to our Master? "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith," says St. Paul. "As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge, will render to me." (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.)

Yes, St. Paul won the victory, but there are not many heroes like St. Paul. True, my dear brethren, and it is only natural for us to wonder, have we a chance of overcoming our enemies? "Their power is great, their courage undaunted, their hatred of us enormous and unmeasured; they wage against us a perpetual war, so that with them there can be no peace, no truce. The devil tempts us to deceive us and precipitate us to ruin. At one time, stimulating us from within, he employs the affections of the soul; at another, assaulting us from without, he makes use of external things, of prosperity, to puff us up with pride, or of adversity to break our spirits." (Council of Trent.)

Appalling is this picture of the enemies that we have

to fight against, the constant temptations that we must endure. But remember and take heart from this—we are not all alone in the conflict. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly from temptation." (2 Pet. ii. 9.) And St. Paul prays: "The God of grace crush Satan under your feet speedily." (Rom. xvi. 20.) Ah! if God is with us, we know how to obtain strength from Him to resist "the most wicked one."

Humbly we must distrust ourselves, and have all confidence in God. "Let no one indulge self-complacency, let no one presumptuously exalt himself, so as to expect to be able by his own strength to overcome hostile temptations and assaults of the demons. That is not within the power of human frailty. The strength is from God, by Whose guidance and assistance alone we are able to conquer." (Council of Trent.)

And we can obtain this assistance from our Blessed Lord by humble, earnest prayer. "For we have not a High Priest Who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, but one tempted in all things like as we are, without sin. Let us go, then, with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid." (Heb. iv. 15, 16.) The devil is afraid of humble prayer. It is the weapon forged against him that God has put into our hands wherewith to resist him. And we have to pray that we yield not to temptation deceived by the wicked one. That is one of his most successful wiles, deceiving us. Has he not appeared to the Saints even as an angel of light, trying to deceive them when every other assault had been in vain? So let us be humble and afraid lest we be deceived. It is not skill or learning will safeguard us, but humble prayer. "The Lord is thy keeper; the Lord is thy protection. The

Lord keepeth thee from evil; may the Lord keep thy soul." (Ps. cxx. 5-7.)

And besides the danger of being deceived there is the chance of being worsted in the fight, wearied out, wounded, lying at the mercy of our enemy. So, again, we have to pray for strength "that the grace of God may be at hand to refresh and invigorate us on the evil day when our own strength may fail. And as long as we pray and as often as we pray this strength will never fail us." (Council of Trent.)

Be not dismayed at this picture of our life on earth —one long struggle with the tempter. "Fear none of those things that thou shalt suffer," says St. John. (Apoc. ii. 10.) He bids us think of the victory and the crown of glory, and that thought will give us courage to persevere. May we overcome temptations day after day, and then the rewards are ours. "He that shall overcome . . . I will confess his name before My Father and before His Angels." (Apoc. iii. 5.) "To him that shall overcome I will grant to sit with Me in My throne." (Apoc. v. 12.) "He that shall overcome . . . I will be his God: and he shall be My son." (Apoc. xxi. 7.)

Second Sunday of Lent

INSISTENCE IN PRAYER

"O woman, great is thy faith; be it done to thee as thou wilt."—MATT. xv. 28.

1. The Gospel narrative.
2. The woman's prayer extorted God's mercy, because she had prayed humbly, faithfully, fervently, and patiently.
3. Our souls afflicted as her daughter was. Our prayer must be insistent like hers.
4. Christ's treatment of the woman was to teach us how to pray.

AT the beginning of Lent, my dear brethren, we naturally expect to find our Blessed Lord adapting His lessons to poor sinners. And in the Gospel narrative from which the text is taken we find a most wonderful example of this. St. Matthew tells us that Jesus "retired into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And behold a woman of Canaan who came out of those coasts, crying out, said to Him, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David: my daughter is grievously troubled by a devil. Who answered her not a word. And His disciples came and besought Him, saying: Send her away, for she crieth after us: And He answering said: I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel. But she came and adored Him, saying: Lord, help me. Who answering,

said : It is not good to take the bread of the children, and to cast it to dogs. But she said : Yea, Lord, for the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters. Then Jesus answering, said to her : O woman, great is thy faith : be it done to thee as thou wilt : and her daughter was cured from that hour." (Matt. xv. 21-28.) Let us thank God for this example of the poor outcast woman, and how her prayer, her insistence in prayer, overcame our Lord, and He worked the miracle she needed.

This Gentile woman, " as soon as she had heard of Him," says St. Mark (vii. 25), fell down at His feet and besought Him. Notice the repulse, my dear brethren ; our hearts have been benumbed at the same, " Who answered her not a word." How many would have given up the quest, crushed and hurt ! But that was not all. The disciples actually came and besought Him to send her away. They were Jews ; she was a Gentile. And our Blessed Lord seemed to agree with them, for He said : " I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel." The sheep ! Then what was she and her daughter ? Oh ! our Lord was soon to tell her, and that even after her next humble, abject appeal. She adored Him, and said : " Lord, help me." Who answering said : " It is not good to take the bread of the children and cast it to dogs." What humility ! what faith ! She took the word " dogs " without resentment, without discouragement, and again pressed her petition on the very ground of being a dog ! " Yea, Lord, for the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters."

What could withstand such humility ? The lesson was ended, our Lord was overcome, and from His

Sacred Heart, no longer hiding its love and tenderness, came forth that blessed answer : " O woman, great is thy faith ; be it done to thee as thou wilt." " For this saying, go thy way," as St. Mark puts it (verse 29). What a victory she had won, because she had prayed faithfully, humbly, fervently, patiently !

My dear brethren, every one of us has need to learn this lesson—how to pray—for our soul is afflicted as her daughter was, " grievously troubled by the devil." There are not only our past sins, which we have repeated so often that we may well doubt our past repentances, but the sins which even now perhaps grievously trouble our souls. Then there are the evil effects of our sinful life, our proneness to evil, our weaknesess, our unruly passions—for we do not the things that we would—our bad companions, evil surroundings, the sinful habits, which make us realize that we are slaves indeed. Who can free us from all this ? Where is the power and strength to come from, but from that outraged Saviour Whom we have sinned against so often ? How have His kindness and His mercy been repaid ? By relapses, perhaps more frequent relapses into sin, greater carelessness and laxity, more self-indulgence and less prayers.

No wonder, then, that God, to force us to be more in earnest, more humble and fearful, sometimes seems to heed us not. He answers us not a word. And all the time the loving Jesus is anxious lest we abandon our good purpose of repenting, and His grace secretly strengthens us for another appeal. Perhaps He has to repulse us once again, knowing that if our prayer was heard so easily and so soon our efforts would relax, and once more we should fall. Our prayer, then, must be all the more insistent and our soul

all the more humbled under the Lord's silence and delay.

Has God ever been to us as hard, as cruelly hard, as our Blessed Lord seemed to be to this poor woman ? My dear brethren, outwardly He repulsed, inwardly He attracted her by His Divine grace to persevere in her prayer. Human nature could not have borne it and answered as she did. It was all to teach us how to pray. If God does delay, and is silent, and passes us by, and permits us to be misunderstood and spoken of cruelly, it is all for some good and loving purpose. We are dear to Him, and He wants us to be worthy of His love. The more humble and patient our prayer, the more pleasing we shall be to Him. If we have to wait for the crumbs that fall from the table where others can be fed, let us not be envious and murmur. We deserve it for our sins, and if we take it humbly and meekly, and still continue praying, one crumb from the table of the Lord, with His blessing, can comfort us, strengthen us, and reward us for all the prayers we have persevered in humbly, fervently, patiently.

Third Sunday of Lent

THE STANDARD OF THE CROSS

"Enemies of the Cross of Christ."—PHIL. iii. 18.

1. Enemies then and now: and enemies though redeemed by the Cross.
2. Who are they? Those who have perverted their mind, glory, and even their God.
3. Whereas the lessons of Him, Who died on the Cross, are: Deny yourselves; take up your cross; and follow Me.

IF anything should stop us in a sinful course of life, my dear brethren, it is to find ourselves branded as "enemies of the Cross of Christ." St. Paul is not afraid to speak out, and thus he stigmatizes men who, within living memory of the Death on the Cross, so far forget themselves as to bring this rebuke upon themselves—"enemies of the Cross of Christ." If there were men, even in those early days, within thirty years of the Crucifixion, who deserved this title, how likely that now there are many—perhaps who little think it—who deserve the same for their crimes and misdeeds.

What a foul and treacherous thing it is to be the enemy of that by which we have been saved! It is not of those who knew no better—of heathens or pagans—that St. Paul speaks, but of those who have been redeemed by the Death on the Cross. There, then, is

the rebellion, the malice of such men. Let us examine who they may be, what has led them astray, lest we too, contaminated by evil, should find ourselves amongst them.

Who are they, then ? St. Paul tells us : " For many walk, of whom I have told you often (and now tell you weeping) that they are enemies of the Cross of Christ ; whose end is destruction ; whose God is their belly ; and whose glory is in their shame ; who mind earthly things." They have perverted their mind, their glory, even their God, whose end is destruction. The Apostle seems to account for their wickedness by their minding earthly things.

Their mind, which had been purified from sin, illuminated by faith, trained to look up to Heaven by blessed hope, now seeking, content with, grovelling amongst earthly things. Luxury and drunkenness usurp the place of God, and to indulge their impure passions is their boast, making their shame their glory. Such a life soon wrecks body and soul ; their end is destruction. Even nations cannot stand when their people indulge in such a life, and great cities, once the pride of the world, for such crimes are now obliterated by the sands of time.

How common is it in our own day, alas ! for men who have been baptized, instructed, have made their first Communion, have been confirmed, to get carried away on the tide of worldliness. They lose their hold of God, and the things of God. They begin only to mind earthly things, to be engrossed by them, to be misled by them. These are they who, in a spirit of independence and self-sufficiency, have contracted a mixed marriage ; in hopes of a legacy have let a child or two be christened in some other faith ; have loose

views of dogmas and doctrines, speak lightly of the Church and its rulers, of priests and nuns ; who, as long as they are outwardly respectable, think nothing of secret sin ; who never think of curbing their pleasures, their appetites, their sinful desires ; who are out of the Church, for their Easter Communion may not have been made for years—these are the modern specimens whom St. Paul would call " enemies of the Cross of Christ . . . whose end is destruction." " How much more, do you think he deserveth worse punishments, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God . . . and hath offered an affront to the Spirit of Grace ?" (Heb. x. 29.)

Lest we should be led astray by such as these, listen to the lesson of the Cross, to the words of Him Who died for us on that Cross " If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself." (Matt. xvi. 24.) Self-denial ! what a contradiction to the spirit of this world ! Instead of minding earthly things, we have to despise them, deny ourselves of anything that savours of sin—yea, and to obtain the power over ourselves of doing that, we have to practise self-denial even in things that are no harm.

" Let him take up his cross " (*ibid.*) submission and obedience demanded of us. We do not choose our cross, but we have to take up and carry the one that is given us. And we cannot do as we like, we are not Christ's unless we obey, for He says, " And he that taketh not up his cross . . . is not worthy of Me." (Matt. x. 38.)

Cut off from the world by self-denial, loaded with our cross, whither shall we turn ? The third word is " and follow Me." No fear, no doubt, no hesitation need be ours in following the footsteps of Jesus Christ.

It is the sure path to Heaven. It is well worn now, for how many thousands have bravely followed after Him. And if it is weary and long we cannot, should not complain, for He went first. Our Lord had a heavier cross, for He bore the sins of us all. With a good heart, my dear brethren, let us follow our Lord and Master. We want not to be of the spirit of this world, but to be like Him. To grow like unto Him we must often think of Him, visit Him, see Him near, and study His blessed words and deeds and ways; ponder over how He suffered, and why He suffered. Having learned this lesson, we shall despise earthly things, we shall glory in the lessons of the Cross of Christ, cheerfully denying ourselves, obediently taking up our cross, and lovingly following our Lord.

Most of us, alas! in looking back, must own that we have wasted perhaps years of our lifetime. We could not bring ourselves to break completely with earthly things and to be all for Jesus. But, fearing now to become enemies of the Cross of Christ, let us give ourselves wholly and manfully to the service of God, denying ourselves, taking up our cross and following our Lord. In earnest zeal let us say with St. Paul, "But one thing I do: forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before, I press towards the mark, to the prize of the supernal vocation of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. iii. 13, 14.)

Fourth Sunday of Lent

THE HOLY MASS

"Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?"—JOHN vi. 5.

1. The miracle the figure of the Mass.
2. The Bread we receive is life-giving nourishment.
3. Is given to us meritoriously, for we receive in faith.
4. It is given to us freely.
5. How is it men neglect our Lord in the Holy Mass? They should want "to make Him King."

THE Gospel read to-day, my dear brethren, vividly brings to mind that other Bread which Christ was to bless and give for the food of our souls—that other bread, to consecrate which every priest has been entrusted with the power. The Gospel is so well chosen for this time. "For a great multitude followed Him," as we know our Catholic people do in the holy time of Lent. And "the Pasch, the festival day of the Jews, was near at hand." The Church, like her Lord, is anxious to feed her children.

The Holy Mass, with Communion, either spiritual or sacramental, is forced upon us as the subject of our devout thoughts to-day. Need we any reminding, any exhortation about the Mass? Surely not. It is a Catholic's privilege and glory to be present at the Holy Sacrifice. To be allowed to come, to know he

has a right to come, to know that he is so welcome, should make him look forward to and long for the holy time of Mass. Calvary to be renewed upon our altar, and we poor sinners made welcome, to pray, to be forgiven, to unite our hearts to the Victim offered for us. The bread and wine to be consecrated, and we to partake! "The chalice of benediction, which we bless, is it not the Communion of the Blood of Christ? And the bread, which we break, is it not the partaking of the Body of the Lord?" (1 Cor. x.16.) Yes, Christ is given to us as the food of our souls. Health, strength, growth, life for our souls, are its results, as they are for our bodies, from the food and drink of which we must necessarily partake. How seldom do we find people voluntarily starving themselves to death—it would be a madman's deed! Aye, starve their bodies; but their souls, how common it is, scarcely noticed by others, and they themselves that do it think thereby (missing Mass and Communion) that they show their independence and superiority. What utter folly, starving, perishing, through our own fault, and ready to our hand the table laid, the minister of the Lord blessing and distributing the Sacramental Bread, the Body of the Saviour! Oh, here is the food of the wayfarer, the life-giving nourishment, in which our souls are strengthened to walk and persevere through this exile to the land of the Blessed!

Attending Mass, receiving the Blessed Sacrament, are so meritorious because they are done in faith. The merit, my dear brethren, is beyond our calculation and understanding; but we know this: that we cannot give such honour, glory, and thanksgiving to God by any other means. We cannot so efficaciously supplicate His pardon and mercy at any other time. We

cannot ask Him for favours, graces, privileges at any other time, that we can so confidently trust to obtaining as we can during Mass. We believe in the Holy Sacrifice, we believe that Christ is present, the very Saviour that died for us. We believe that that which is consecrated, though it may look like bread, is truly and really the Body of Jesus Christ. We believe—we do not see—and the blessing and reward of faith is bestowed upon us. And the union of Christ and the souls of men in the Holy Eucharist is so complete that we can say, in the words of the Mass: "Through Him and with Him and in Him there is to the Father and the Holy Spirit all honour and glory." Oh, the merit of the faith and the union! "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven: that if any man eat of it he may not die. . . . If any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever." (John vi. 50, 52.)

Christ could do no more, for He has given us Himself, and given us Himself freely. If He had made it a difficult and arduous task to attend Mass, men might have had an excuse, but perhaps they would have been more in earnest. But Christ has given us Himself, freely and actually yearns for us to come. He is bestowing the benefits, and yet is so anxious and pleased that He might be receiving them.

How is it, my dear brethren, that men do neglect our Blessed Lord in the Holy Mass? Is it want of faith? No, not as regards the men to whom we refer—the Catholics. They know well what the Mass is and the obligation under mortal sin to attend if they are able. Where can one find a reason to refuse this loving invitation of the Saviour? The real reasons are not the foolish excuses, sometimes heard, that one does

not like the priest; that home is so disturbed one cannot attend; that one is as good as those who do go, and the rest. The real reason is that they are so entangled in their sins that they cannot go, they are not free to go. Their pride will not like to own this; they are slaves, and not masters. Oh, we could go if we chose, they may say. No, you cannot; that is not true. St. Paul tells that we cannot say the Holy Name Jesus except by the power of the Holy Ghost. Much less, then, can you attend Holy Mass except the grace of the Holy Spirit is given you. And you must make room for the grace of God in your heart by turning out the sins and bad habits and indulgences that disgrace that which should be the dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit. This is the work of Lent. Give up sin, pray to God, and He will grant you grace to come to Mass, and to prepare your soul for Communion. Be afraid of that state of lethargy, which overcomes so many souls and deprives them of the strength and merit of Holy Mass. Cultivate in your souls devotion and love for the Blessed Sacrifice in which Christ our Lord so freely offers Himself—our Redemption now, our reward hereafter. Those who are devout to Holy Mass have only one longing—to make Christ King of their hearts; that all they do and suffer should be for Him, that all their love and loyalty should own allegiance to no one else save Him.

Passion Sunday

THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

"How much more shall the Blood of Christ . . . cleanse our conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"—HEB. ix. 14.

1. The Precious Blood the source—
   Of Redemption;
   Of the Sacrifice of the Mass;
   Of graces, through the Sacraments;
   Of merit.
2. The conversion of our hearts to serve God, the return our Lord demands, and the only one that will satisfy Him.

WE are nearing the time, my dear brethren, when the Precious Blood of Christ was shed for the remission of sin, and surely nothing so richly deserves our thoughts, our study, and our devotion. Christ our Lord took upon Himself to redeem us, and He determined to do so in a manner that would prove to all His infinite love and mercy. Oh, if He had lovingly wept over us as He did at the grave of Lazarus, His blessed tears could have washed away our sins! It would have been a proof to angels and to men as it was to the Jews, when they said: "Behold, how He loved him." (John xi. 36.)

But for our sakes our dear Lord was not content with such a redemption. Should we have realized the malice and heinousness of sin if it had been so easily

forgiven ? Should we strive our best and utmost to avoid sin if it had only cost a tear ? Again, after a long life of wickedness, might not men have been tempted to despair, to doubt that tears could wash away such crimes as theirs ? Therefore our Lord gave Himself to sufferings indescribable, and from the Agony in the garden until the spear pierced His Side He shed His Blood and all His Precious Blood for the Redemption of mankind. Thus was at once proved His infinite mercy and love—the malice of wilful sin—and yet that full ransom had been paid for the greatest sins that could be committed.

But this Redemption to be efficacious has to be applied to individual souls. The Redemption, then, had to be continued, to be renewed as long as sinners might seek its saving powers. Therefore the Precious Blood in the Holy Mass is the source of our hope and comfort. Each and every one can find his way to the Calvary of the Altar. And if we had to bring the burden of sins day after day, there would be forgiveness if we truly repented. And if not compelled by sin, should not a desire to render homage and thanksgiving bring us to the Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ ?

Moreover, the Precious Blood is the source of the graces we receive through the Sacraments. The water of Baptism has its efficacy from the Blood of the Saviour. And the Sacrament of Penance has miraculous power of restoring the dead soul to the life of grace from that same Precious Blood. And the Holy Oils have been blessed and received their powers from the same Divine Source—" the chrism of salvation " it is called at Confirmation. And when we come to die the priest will anoint us, and pray

"Through this holy anointing and His own most tender mercy may the Lord pardon thee whatever thou hast committed by sight or speech and the other senses." Whence this power but from the Blood that was shed for the remission of sins?

Lastly, the Precious Blood is the source of all merit. Not only does it "cleanse our conscience from dead works," but it enables us "to serve the living God"—to serve Him acceptably, to please Him, render Him honour and glory, and to be rewarded for this service. The Church is the store-house of the merits of Jesus Christ, and it has the power to dispense these merits to its children.

My dear brethren, is there nothing that we can do in return for all the Precious Blood does for us? Is it to be all receiving on our part, and no giving, no making a sacrifice to Him Who has done so much for us? Yes, dear brethren, sacrifice demands generosity and love calls for love in return. The Precious Blood speaks to us of sacrifice and love above all that words can say, and our Good Lord asks a recompense—the conversion, the turning of our hearts to Him, the giving, the surrendering of our hearts to Him. How can we ever repay Him for the Blood that He has shed? He has purchased our souls and our hearts, and is it not an insult if He beholds in them anything but love and piety and zeal for His honour and glory? And what does He see within them—yea, perhaps the very day that they have been cleansed in His Blood at Confession and Communion? What does He see but attachment to sin, and selfishness and distractions and carelessness at prayer? What does He see, alas! in many a soul that once was pure and innocent but mortal sin enthroned there, and vile passions defiling

that which once was cleansed and purified by His own most Sacred Blood ?

Let the memory of all this Precious Blood has done for us move and incite us to be brave soldiers of our Master, Christ, to fight against temptation boldly for His sake, to be animated, to be zealous in all good works, and to bear all patiently as coming from the hand of God. Our hearts are the only offering that our Blessed Lord demands, and the only offering that will satisfy Him. Let us give them to Him generously, without reserve, and His Precious Blood will cleanse them, beautify them, invigorate them, so that it will be our joy and glory to serve our dear Redeemer.

Palm Sunday

THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST

"O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow."—LAM. i. 12.

1. The time for sympathy ; yet so many forget.
2. Sufferings both of body and soul.
3. From those who afflicted Him—their ingratitude.
4. The grief that His Passion was to be of no avail to many.
5. Realize who was the sufferer.

WE cannot ask our Blessed Lord, my dear brethren, for any grace which it will please Him more to grant us than a devout sympathy with the sufferings of His Passion and Death. And when should we sympathize if not during Holy Week ? Alas ! how many pass by the way, unheeding, with never a thought for the Lord that died for them ! So many forget ! So few grieve as they should. But as we attend to see and contemplate His sorrows, we are joining a holy throng —the Saints of God, who found their strength and courage and patience in this devotion to the Passion and Death of their Redeemer.

Look at the cross, and study the sufferings which that blessed Body had endured. Every sense had offered itself to martyrdom. What had the scourges, the crown of thorns, the carrying of the cross, the falls under its weight, the nails, the lance, spared in

that sacred Body ? It was one wound. All that was agonizing and excruciating had been borne, and the ignominy of it all as well—the blasphemies, the condemnation, the derision, the cry, "Crucify Him!" and the insults as He hung upon the cross.

And His soul had anticipated all this. The cross had loomed before Him all His life. And those nights He had spent in prayer, in Gethsemane or on the mountain-side—how His soul had lived through His Passion, and He persevered and endured! And to the very end His blessed mind unclouded, prolonging each minute of those long hours on Calvary, to suffer all the more for us.

More cruel than the scourges, sharper than the nails, was the ingratitude of His people for whom He died—the false accusations ; the fickleness of the crowd, to so many of whom He had done good ; the faithlessness of those who had believed in Him ; the cowardice of His disciples. "O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be sorrow like to My sorrow." Forsaken and abandoned, He bore the burden of our sins Himself upon the cross.

Moreover, there was a special bitterness of grief that coursed through the whole of His Passion. It began in the garden, when the review of all the iniquities of the world passed before Him, and caused the agony and sweat of blood. It ended in those cries from the cross, "I thirst," and "Why hast Thou forsaken Me ?" This was His special grief and disappointment—that His sufferings and Death would be of no avail for so many. How hard it was to contemplate how unbelief, disobedience, neglect of grace, self-indulgence, bad passions run riot, and the devil, the instigator of all, should rob Him of so many souls

for whom He suffered and died! He longed to be their Saviour; they would not have Him. And, alas! how often have we ourselves added to this grief! Each time we have fallen away we have risked the salvation of our soul. Each day and week and month that we have lived on in sin we have been playing hazard with the Redemption that Christ died to purchase for us. With heart-felt sorrow let us beg pardon for all this now. How sad to think that many a time we have added to the sufferings of our Lord! As soon as we are sorry, and turn to Him and promise to be faithful, our Blessed Saviour is actually glad that He suffered and died for us. Yes; He willingly offered Himself to be sacrificed for us—it was all for us—to free us from sin and eternal punishment, and to purchase heaven for us.

As we look upon the Crucified One, let us not forget to realize Who this is that is hanging on the cross. Yes; with the centurion, who stood over against Him and heard His cry as He expired, let us confess, "Indeed this Man was the Son of God." (Mark xv. 39.) As St. Paul tells us, we adore Him "Christ Jesus, Who being in the form of God . . . emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men. . . . He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Phil. ii. 5-8.)

Realize, too, why the Son of God did this. Our faith is firm on the words of Scripture. God "spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." (Rom. viii. 32.) This one word should bring us to our knees before the cross, crushed and repentant—"for us all." For us those wounds; for us that love that broke His Heart; for us that cry,

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (Luke xxiii. 34.) Repentance for the past is true sympathy for the sufferer. Let us lay all our sins at His feet, and beg for sorrow and for pardon. The grief to think that these wretched sins of ours caused all those sufferings to the Son of God! And after knowing this, and repenting of them, that we have fallen again and again! The sufferings of Christ and His sorrows are beyond words, but the love that prompted Him to suffer so much and for such ungrateful sinners is far more wonderful. Pray for a tender remembrance of your Saviour's love and sufferings, and sorrow and devotion will be given to you that will propitiate and please God and purify your souls.

Easter

THE EASTER COMMUNION

"Christ our Pasch is sacrificed."—1 Cor. v. 7.

1. Like the Pasch of the Jews, Easter Communion is the food of the wayfarer.
2. To receive worthily, the leaven of malice must be purged out.
3. Then to set out "in sincerity and truth"—
   (*a*) With thankful hearts to persevere in good works;
   (*b*) And to hurry on the journey.
4. At Easter we, too, have risen from lethargy and sin; we must therefore seek and mind the things above.

The Pasch, or Passover, of the Jews was the feast celebrated by them in commemoration of their deliverance from the Egyptian bondage. Our Blessed Lord kept the observance the night before He died. He and His disciples stood round the table, girt as men ready for the escape and the journey, and partook of the lamb and the unleavened bread. How full was the sacred Heart of Christ with the significance of all that was to be done that night! Then He—the Lamb of God Himself—took the unleavened bread and blessed it, and instituted the new Pasch, the Sacrament of the new deliverance, the new food of the wayfarer seeking the heavenly kingdom. This explains how St. Paul, twenty-five years later, came to write to the Cor-

inthians to this effect: Purge out the old leaven; for our Pasch, Christ the Lord, has been sacrificed for us, and let us keep the feast in the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

As the Pasch was most religiously observed by every Jew, so the new Pasch—the Eastern Communion—is an institution ordered by the Church, and to be strictly observed by every Catholic. The ceremonial of the ancient rite is typical of much that we have to adhere to most carefully. The Apostle tells us to purge out the old leaven, that we may not feast with the leaven of malice and wickedness. Yes; our conscience has to be purified, and we have a ceremonial instituted for cleansing our souls from malice and wickedness. That has been the work of the holy time of Lent, preparing for it, accomplishing it through the Sacrament of Penance. A good Confession has been the blessed means of our deliverance from the land of bondage, from the slavery of the devil. No mere anniversary this; no ceremonial commemorative only of a deliverance that had taken place, but a greater reality to our souls than the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt. They only escaped an earthly bondage, we the eternal bondage of mortal sin and the punishment due to it. If they had cause for perpetual thanksgiving, how much more does Easter speak to us of deliverance, joy, and gratitude!

And if we are thankful for the escape from "malice and wickedness" and the judgment that follows on, let us in "all sincerity and truth" fulfil the precept of the Lord. Christ in His mercy has made Himself the food of the wayfarer. Therefore, strengthened with this food, we must set out with rectitude and a pure intention to persevere in the way to our promised

land, the kingdom of heaven—our sins repented of, error, any taint of infidelity, a worldly spirit, all cast from us, for a little leaven corrupteth the whole. And, instead of these, take up and live in the works of sincerity and truth, such as daily prayer, the Sunday's Mass, frequently repeated Communions, the food to keep us up to the vigour and effort of these good works. And we must do all this with a thankful heart. We have escaped, we have been delivered, and Easter is the festival of our victory.

One more lesson to be learned from the ancient institution of the Jews. They partook of the Paschal lamb, as their forefathers had done the night of their deliverance ; they stood round the table, with staves in their hands and their garments girded round them like men ready for a journey. Yes, my brethren, as each year comes round, another Easter bids us hurry on the journey. Have we made good our escape ? or have we spent another year dallying with the flesh-pots of Egypt, the pleasures of an easy, sinful life, instead of having broken with sin, and hurried on to safety, obeying God ?

Have we these dispositions in our hearts this Easter ? Have we really turned out malice and wickedness, manfully got quit of them, broken with bad habits and evil companions, or shall we allow them in a few days to take up their old abode in our hearts ? Have we proved our sincerity and truth by being prepared to do all that is demanded of us ? Do we feel an eagerness bidding us set out and hurry on the journey ?

We, too, have risen this Easter-time from sin and lethargy, and, if we have risen with Christ, "seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God . . . mind the things that are above."

(Col. iii. 1, 2.) We are false to our Redeemer unless we endeavour to make a change in our lives. Despising this world and all that it may offer—and surely our Lenten Confession taught us that—we must seek the things that are above. Our interests, our aims, our hearts' desire, must be centred in the worship, the glorifying, the obeying God, "that as Christ be risen from the dead . . . so we also may walk in newness of life." (Rom. vi. 4.)

My dear brethren, an Easter Communion is not just an ordinary one. True, it is the same Body and Blood of Jesus Christ our Saviour that we receive in each and every Communion, but the Easter one fulfils a precept—there is stamped on it the merit of obedience. The Easter one is a commemorative one—we glorify God that Christ our Pasch is sacrificed. It is a fresh start for every one on the way to heaven. We must not look back, but press onwards. But we cannot help our thoughts looking back, and the memory of old friends and comrades takes us back. Where are they? They are not amongst the happy band of those who have risen with Christ. Alas! how many —Catholics in name—stay away from their Easter Communion! Do not judge them: pray for them; ask our Blessed Lord to win them over, to enlighten them, that they may understand that this is not their lasting home, that they are only wayfarers, that this is a land of exile, that the journey to their home is long and toilsome. Oh that there might be only one band, all united, seeking the heavenly fatherland! We have the food of the wayfarer, Christ our Lord; we bear Him with us; He strengthens us on our journey, and when we have reached our home He becomes our eternal reward, the glory of our salvation.

Low Sunday

GOD OR THE WORLD?

"The friendship of this world is an enemy of God."—Jas. iv. 4.

1. The love of God and of the world.
2. What is meant by the world.
3. We have to be in the world; the evil and the dangers of it.
4. How to overcome the world:
   Its twofold attack—adversity, pleasure.
   The victory won by faith.

St. Augustine tells us that there are two loves, which make two different cities or kingdoms—the love of God, spiritual and infused, which makes the city of God, the Church of the elect; the love of the world and of self, so centred as to exclude God, that makes the city of the wicked, which is the kingdom of the devil, by whom it is possessed and ruled. "Know you not that the friendship of this world is the enemy of God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of this world becometh an enemy of God." (James iv. 4.) This is the friendship that makes men insubordinate, disobedient, and displeasing to God. "Love not the world," says St. John, "nor the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him." (1 John ii. 15.)

But let us beware of unreality and exaggeration; instead of doing good they do harm. So let us see plainly and exactly what is meant by the world and the friendship of the world. By the world here is meant vain and vicious men, who love carnal, transitory, and earthly things inordinately—that is, to the exclusion of God—and these very things themselves, which such men seek and desire, grasp and cling to, that they may be enriched, praised, and exalted in this short life.

Here is the evil and danger of it all. We are in the world, and have to be in the world and mix with the world; where is the evil, then, in loving the things of the world? God's love has to be first and foremost in our hearts, and wherever and whenever things of the world seek to take this first place, there is the evil and the danger. Therefore duty to God constantly calls upon us to despise, break with, and even to hate the things and friendships of this world, inasmuch as they hinder us, or actually pervert us, from seeking and loving God. "For all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, which is not of the Father, but of the world." (1 John ii. 16.) We must, then, thus far overcome the world that we shall not allow it or any creature friend of it so to entice us that, for the desire or love of it, we shall transgress the law of God.

As "the friendship of this world is an enemy of God," as the text tells us, we see plainly that we cannot be friends with both. God and the world have nothing in common; their ends are diametrically opposed to each other. The world bows down to wealth, influence, success; Christ blesses poverty, meekness, perse-

cution. The world makes the most of the present and the things of life, for it knows in its heart that it passeth away. Christ bids us remember that we are pilgrims and wayfarers here, to rejoice if the world hates us, for our true home is heaven, whither we are tending. "Wonder not, brethren, if the world hate you." (1 John iii. 13.)

A twofold attack does the world advance against the servants of Christ. Adversity threatens that we may lose courage, and through fear be induced to sin. The world tried this for three hundred years of persecution in the early ages ; it has tried it again in later times in many countries, and especially in England and in Ireland. And the glorious martyrs gave a triumphant answer, and gladly laid down their lives for the love of God. And the martyrs of more recent times vied in courage and alacrity with the martyrs of the olden days. The children of the Church had not changed with the lapse of centuries. In the same blessed choir of martyrs we behold Ignatius of Antioch and Fisher of Rochester, Cyprian and Thomas More, Lawrence and Campion the Jesuit !

And the second mode of attack is an insidious one—the seductions of pleasure and prosperity, amusements and love, to entice and attract, to deceive and ensnare the hearts of the unwary and imprudent. This is the attack to which, in our days, so many, especially the young and impulsive, fall victims. Too self-willed to heed warnings, resenting interference, they are swept on with the crowds of pleasure-seekers, forgetful of God and their souls ; the love of the world slowly but surely possessing itself of their heart and ruling it. He alone can withstand this attack who, with the eye of faith, looks up to God, and for His love and

honour despises and rejects the blandishments of all created things.

St. John tells us what power it is that overcomes the world—our faith: "This is the victory that overcometh the world, our faith" (1 John v. 4)—the faith that tells us Jesus Christ is our Saviour and our Judge, and therefore that our lives and hearts should be all for Him. A lively, strenuous faith pleases God so much! It is above all riches and honours and the substance of this world. It is the gift of God, but we can pray for it, and pray for more and more of it. The Gospels bid us do it. "And Jesus saith, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And immediately crying out, with tears, he said, I do believe, Lord: help my unbelief." (Mark ix. 22, 23.) "And Jesus saith, Have the faith of God. . . . Whatsoever you ask when ye pray, believe that you shall receive; and they shall come unto you." (Mark xi. 22, 24.)

Let us pray for the love of God and the contempt of the world, with faith such as this. Then victory would be ours. May that faith be ours which, as St. Augustine says, "saves sinners, opens the eyes of the blind, cures the sick, baptizes, justifies, restores poor penitents to God's favour, increases the merits of the just, crowns martyrs, preserves all in a sinless life, and places the elect with the angels in their eternal inheritance." May the great and Blessed God deign to bestow this faith upon us all!

Second Sunday after Easter

THE REMEMBRANCE OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS

"Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps."—1 PET. ii. 21.

1. Power of remembrance of the Passion—
   In prayer;
   In helping us to carry our cross through life.
2. All have to suffer. The contrast—
   Why and how sufferings are borne.
3. St. Peter's example: "Quo vadis, Domine?" ("Whither goest Thou, Lord?")

THE Church is unwilling that we should forget the Sufferings and Death of our Blessed Lord, and therefore, thus soon after Easter, chooses these words of St. Peter for the Epistle: "Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps." The lesson of those sufferings must be so deeply impressed upon our souls that our very lives shall be moulded and formed by their remembrance.

Remembrance of them, indeed, is the life of devotion. How fervent is prayer when the eyes of our soul are gazing on the crucifix, when we are studying those Wounds in His hands, feet, and side! And how this remembrance makes us realize the grand sacrifice of the Mass! The same Victim is there offered for the sins of the world, the same Blood that was shed, the

same Blessed Body that died upon the cross. And Catholics can come to Mass, and pass the time in distraction, and think it weary and long, and perhaps even at the Consecration never lovingly adore that same Christ Who suffered for them. And other Catholics there are who, Sunday after Sunday, neglect the Holy Mass, and begrudge a few minutes to come and adore and bless and thank Him, "Who His own self bore our sins in His Body on the tree."

But even earnest Catholics whose prayers and fervour at Mass are borne up before the throne of God by this remembrance must not be content. More is required. This remembrance is necessary, but it is cherished that it may urge us to follow His steps. "Whosoever doth not carry his cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple." (Luke xiv. 27.) How many dread and shirk this duty! We have to follow the example of Christ. And Christ suffered for us. We too must suffer if we wish to be His disciples and to be like Him. "All that live piously in Christ Jesus," says St. Paul, "shall suffer persecution." (2 Tim. iii. 12.) And St. Luke: "Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God." (Acts xiv. 21.)

Look around, my dear brethren, and where is the man who passes through life without worries, misfortunes, sorrows, afflictions, and sickness? These are not evils. Bear them for the love of Christ, Who suffered for us; bear them following in His steps, and thus you will enter into your glory. The Council of Trent teaches us: "As in this life many and various calamities and afflictions oppress us, the faithful are especially to be taught that those who bear with a patient mind whatever trials and afflictions God may have sent them have found ample matter of satisfaction

and merit; but that those who endure such suffering with unwillingness and repugnance are deprived of all fruit of satisfaction, and only undergo the chastisement and punishment of God by a just judgment avenging sins." (Part ii., chap. v., lxxi.)

What a contrast! Sufferings borne for the love of God, and sufferings borne with murmuring and repining. Those who murmur are not the disciples of Christ; those who bear them with a patient mind are taking up their cross and following His steps. And they gain the strength and courage to do so through the devout remembrance of the sufferings of their Lord. And the more they cherish that holy remembrance and love of Christ crucified, the more strength they will have to bear their cross after Him. "Think diligently upon Him, Who endured such opposition from sinners against Himself; that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds." (Heb. xii. 3.) That is the way St. Paul nerved himself up to do and suffer so much for Christ.

Let us take to heart the example which Christ has left us, lest we prove unworthy of Him. May the memory of His sufferings be ever in our mind, that we may learn bravely to take up our cross and follow Him.

The words of the text are the words of St. Peter, and his life and death tell us that he had taken the example left him, and followed the steps of His Master. He says: "If you partake of the sufferings of Christ, rejoice . . . if you be reproached for the name of Christ, you shall be blessed. . . . Let them that suffer according to the Will of God commend their souls in good deeds to the faithful Creator." (1 Pet. iii. 13-19.)

How well these words come from the mouth of him who was scourged for preaching the name of Christ,

"rejoicing to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus" (Acts v. 40); who was imprisoned by Herod; who in the Mamertine prison in Rome refused to be liberated, preferring the cross, to be like his Master.

Even the most devout may sometimes be despondent, and fail in bearing their sufferings for Christ's sake. But we must not give up and lose heart even if we fall. Rise up and begin again. And St. Peter is our example in this as well. St. Ambrose tells us that when the persecution of Nero broke out, the Christians, thinking how necessary St. Peter was to the infant Church, begged of him to seek safety in flight. And, downhearted and miserable, the Apostle gave way; and fleeing from the city, he met His Blessed Master carrying the cross. An old chapel on the spot of that meeting still stands. "Lord, whither goest Thou?" Christ, casting on him a glance of sadness and love as He had done once before on the night of His Passion, replied: "I am going to Rome to be crucified afresh." The reproof went to the heart of the Apostle. He hastened back to the city full of courage and zeal, and shortly proved that He had learned the lesson well by dying for His Master. Oh, may this blessed remembrance of the sufferings of Christ not only make us devout in prayer, but humble and brave in bearing our cross and following His footsteps.

Third Sunday after Easter

JOURNEYING TO HEAVEN

"I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims."—1 Pet. ii. 11.

1. Sin banished man from paradise; this life a journey to gain the heavenly one.
2. Are we mindful that we are wayfarers? For wayfarers travel light; watch their way; are anxious to get on; look forward to home.
3. Are we not the opposite to this? Settling on the way; no thought of the fatherland.

Even in St. Peter's day, my dear brethren, he found it necessary to warn his converts to refrain themselves from carnal desires, and to remember that they are merely strangers and pilgrims in this life. Sin banished man from the earthly paradise, and the painful, weary work of life had henceforth to be to seek and attain the heavenly paradise. We are meant for heaven; but we have to get there, to reach it: it does not come to us. So, whether we like it or not, we are wayfarers in this world, which is not a lasting home—we are simply strangers and pilgrims.

How many of us in our daily life are mindful of this? Let us see what a real wayfarer would do and would be like. The first rule of a traveller who wants to get over the ground is to travel light, with as little luggage and encumbrance as need be. "For we

brought nothing into this world, and certainly we can carry nothing out. But having food, and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content. For they that will become rich fall into temptation and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men into destruction and perdition." So says St. Paul to Timothy, his friend and wayfarer. (1 Tim. vi. 7-9.)

And wayfarers watch the direction they should take, are afraid of losing it, seek trustworthy guides, and are on the alert against enemies; for there are enemies besetting many a journey, but none more so than the way to heaven. And these enemies frequently join us as friends—false friends, indeed, to the unwary. The wise wayfarer is not hasty in making friends, but should rather pray to be like Tobias—for God to be with him, and his angel to accompany him on the way.

Anxious the wayfarer ever is to get on—to get on; and he fears the perils of the night, which is drawing on so rapidly. And if the journey has to be accomplished in that one day—the day of life—how doubly anxious is he as the light begins to wane!

And lastly, my dear brethren, a wayfarer looks forward and is longing to be home. And as he pictures his home to himself and the greetings of love that await him, fatigue is forgotten, and a new impulse invigorates his weary limbs.

Enough of this description of the wayfarer, for how little there is in common between that and our own lives! If this is what we should be like, can we claim to be wise and earnest in our journey towards heaven? A traveller wants to get over the ground, to get on his way; and we have settled down, find the world com-

fortable, never doubt that we have a long lease of our house, are quite taken up with our friends, and busied accumulating wealth. "For the desire of money is the root of all evils; which some coveting have erred from faith, and have entangled themselves in many sorrows. But thou fly these things . . . lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art called." (1 Tim. vi. 10-12.)

And when do we take the ordinary precaution of a traveller to inquire for and find out the safest, shortest, and easiest way to heaven? The Scriptures, the Commandments, sermons, our prayers, would give us this knowledge and keep it clear in our minds. But we are too engrossed with the pleasures of the present to see to this, and day succeeds day, and there is no thought of the journey.

Sometimes, perhaps, even our easy-going conscience receives a shock when we find we have been making friends on the way to heaven—friends with the worst enemies of our souls; friends who do not hesitate to laugh at our religion, to sneer at Almighty God, to deny that we have a soul, and to ridicule the idea of heaven, and that we have to do our utmost to try to win it. Even then have we the courage to break with such friends, and to give ourselves to the service of God as real "strangers and pilgrims" in this life?

Moreover, we know not how little time is left to accomplish the journey. We know not what obstacle may detain us—how soon the night may fall, what clouds and storms may hasten the coming of the darkness. We risk being left out in the darkness, the missing our way, the fear, the desolation—we risk all this rather than take thought now and be in earnest, and push on before the evening comes.

And shame on us, my dear brethren, the worst of all—have we not forgotten our fatherland and our home? How can this life be anything but intolerable weariness to a man who lifts up his eyes, and looks and yearns for his home—the kingdom of heaven? Own it—how much influence has the remembrance of heaven on our daily lives? Thank God if its remembrance even keeps us from falling into sin. But should it not do far more? Should it not be the energizing motive to bid us be up and hurrying on the way? Should it not give us the strength to bear our burden patiently and manfully? Should it not detach us from the paltry, short-lived pleasures and pastimes that engross our interests here? My dear brethren, think Who is waiting for us in our home above: think of the Father watching for His children. Alas! how seldom do we give Him a thought! Why, even the poor prodigal thought of his father's house, and yearned for it. Our Lord and Saviour purchased heaven at the price of His most Precious Blood; He ascended into heaven to prepare a home for us; He has placed us in this world in a state of probation, to show ourselves worthy of heaven, worthy of Him. And He looks down, justly expecting to see zealous and grateful pilgrims toiling along, despising and thinking nothing of hardships, heat, or distance, but filled with the loving longing to see their Father in their home. May God grant us this good spirit, refraining ourselves as strangers and pilgrims here, our one thought, our one desire, to be to push on towards our heavenly home, to be with our Father for evermore.

Fourth Sunday after Easter

GRACE

"Every best gift, and every perfect gift, is from above."—Jas. i. 17.

1. Amongst these gifts pre-eminent is grace.
2. A gift necessary for spiritual existence; precious, for how was it purchased? producing everlasting results.
3. A gift so easily lost, but always through our own fault. Can we regain it, and how?
4. Let us treasure this gift.

My dear brethren, we can grow so accustomed even to the greatest benefits and kindnesses that we seldom advert to them, and gratitude for them is unthought of. And is not the grace of God, so freely bestowed on us, often treated in this way? Yet grace deservedly should be classed with the best and perfect gifts from above, from the Father of lights. Grace is the life of our soul, as the soul is the life of the body. No one can earn it or acquire it of himself; it is the gift of God—a gift that is absolutely necessary for our spiritual existence. There have been men who maintained that they themselves could do the works of grace and lead a supernatural life. But, my dear brethren, that error has been condemned (Pelagianism), and we are bound to acknowledge grace as a necessary gift and endowment, for no one can avoid sin, fulfil

the commandments, acquire virtues, please God, and merit heaven of himself.

Grace is a precious gift, for what price was paid for its purchase ? God gives it to us so freely, so lovingly, day after day, we forget the price that was paid for it. It ill becomes us to do so. The price of grace is the atoning Blood of the Divine Redeemer. Is it possible that men understand this and squander grace as they do—that they are not eager to obtain it ; that they wilfully neglect to ask for it at Holy Mass ; that they refuse to accept it by abstaining from Holy Communion ; that even for drink, for a bad thought, for an evil desire, for greed, for envy, for revenge, they will contemptuously toss away God's precious grace, and indulge in their wickedness ? And how often, how often is the great God patient at such affronts from His children ! If we have ever behaved thus wantonly, let us repent, and ask to understand the value of grace henceforth. The precious gift of God, see how the Saints valued it. Rather than lose the grace of faith, the grace of purity, men and even youthful maidens gladly sacrificed their lives, and became martyrs for Christ.

To understand how great a gift grace is, let us look into its effects and results. No one can adequately describe the dignity and excellence of grace. Through grace a man is made supernaturally like to God, becomes the adopted child of God, the servant, the friend, the brother of Christ, the heir of His Creator, and the coheir with His Saviour. Through grace his soul is made the tabernacle of the living God. Grace merits eternal life, and opens heaven to us.

Grace, then, is the gift of God, necessary for us, most precious in itself, most marvellous in its effects.

We can so easily obtain—alas! we can so easily lose it. God is so generous; He grants it to those who ask it lavishly. We are so perverse, so fickle, so prone to evil, that we constantly lose it and neglect it. Yes, easily lost, but remember always through our own fault. We may lay the blame on others, on circumstances, on the tempter, but undeniably it is our own fault when we lose God's grace by sin. We have not valued it as we should; we have grown careless and ungrateful.

So easily lost, are we sure that we can always so easily regain it? Beware, my dear brethren, for here lies hid one of the craftiest of the devil's wiles. He knows how often, how lovingly, how easily God forgives us, and he tempts us to presume on this. He keeps himself hidden in the background, but by means of some companion, some bad book or other, the thought is put into our mind: "What does it signify, an odd sin more or less, a few more weeks of self-indulgence? We can always go to Confession: we shall be forgiven, grace will be restored to us, and we must think seriously of a change in life." It is quite true, my dear brethren, the mercy of God has allowed this kind of thing to go in many cases for years and years. We grow more presumptuous; God's patience is coming to an end; the number of graces allotted to us are growing fewer and fewer. What the devil wants is, that when we come unknowingly to the last grace we cast it away and sin again.

Alas! and when the sad end has come and another soul is lost, the devil insults our Heavenly Father for the waste of His best and perfect gifts, the countless graces He has unavailingly showered upon us.

Let sorrow for past neglect, my dear brethren, and

gratitude for God's patience and manifold graces bring us to our knees before Him now. Let us ask Him for one more grace—the grace to prize, to treasure the graces that He gives us. See how to do it from the inspired words of St. Paul. It is a business and a work—and does it not deserve to be?—to work with the grace of God for everlasting life. "Neglect not the grace that is in thee," says the Apostle. "Be thou an example in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in chastity. Attend to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Meditate on these things, be wholly in these things. Take heed to thyself; be earnest." (1 Tim. iv. 14-16.) This is the way to treasure God's grace. For thus grace makes a man acceptable to God, fit and able to do good, and be brave against the array of vice and temptations of the Evil One; it makes him brave, armed, safeguarded—yea, it will make him victorious. Yea, for this blessed grace takes away sin, frees the soul from spiritual death, and unites it and conforms it to God, makes man loved by God. Thus acceptable to God, grace crowns us by making us fit to merit eternal blessedness.

Fifth Sunday after Easter

CONFIDENCE IN GOD

"And this is the confidence which we have towards Him; that whatsoever we shall ask according to His will, He heareth us."—1 JOHN v. 14.

1. Without confidence in God, our life miserable, our hopes small.
2. But we rightly can have confidence—
   (*a*) From the knowledge of His love and goodness;
   (*b*) From His assurances;
   (*c*) From past experiences of His favours.
3. This confidence, strengthening our prayer, makes of it a supreme power—
   (*a*) To overcome enemies of salvation;
   (*b*) To rouse ourselves to piety and devotion.

WE must often feel, my dear brethren, an utter want of reliance on ourselves, taught us by so many shortcomings and failures in the past. And we look round for a stay, a support to which our souls might cling, and find safety and security. Such a support we shall find in confidence in God, which will brighten our daily lives, and bid hope spring up within us, and assure us that in doing our best we are pleasing God, and securing eternal life for our souls.

It is no mere fancy, but a reality, that we rightly can have this confidence in God, and that the more we trust in Him the more we please Him. And the

foundation of this confidence is the knowledge we have of the goodness and the love of God. The proof of this goodness and love is that He sent His Son into this world to redeem us. "God, Who is rich in mercy, for His exceeding charity wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, by whose grace you were saved." (Eph. ii. 4, 5.) "God sent His Son . . . that He might redeem them who were under the law; that we might receive the adoption of sons." (Gal. iv. 4, 5.)

We have likewise, both in the Old and New Testament, repeated assurances of God's goodness. He assures us and promises us that He is ready to hearken to us, succour us, forgive us, and not to abandon one who hopes in Him. David in his Psalm (xc. 14-16) makes God say: "Because he hoped in Me, I will deliver him. I will protect him because he hath known My Name. He shall cry to Me, and I will hear him. I am with him in tribulation, I will deliver him, and I will glorify him. I will fill him with length of days, and I will show him My salvation." And the wise man bids us "Believe God, and He will recover thee and direct thy way. Trust in Him . . . believe Him, and your reward shall not be made void . . . hope in Him, and mercy shall come to you for your delight. . . . Love Him, and your hearts shall be enlightened." (Ecclus. ii. 6-10.) Our Blessed Lord Himself sums up all the promises and assurances with His own blessed words: "Therefore I say unto you, all things, whatsoever you ask when ye pray, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come unto you." (Mark xi. 24.)

An inner voice tells us the same as the Scriptures. The inner voice of past experience, blessing God for so many favours, bids us have most loving confidence in

Him for the time to come. What mercies and favours we have received from His hands! What countless graces, what gentleness, patience, readiness to forgive have we met with from our dear Lord! From past experience of His love and goodness we may truly say, "And this is the confidence which we have towards Him: that whatsoever we shall ask according to His will, He heareth us."

This confidence in God, then, strengthening our prayer, makes of it a supreme power. Filled with this trust in Him, it is a joy and a glory to pray. God's mercy far exceeds what even the Saints prayed for and longed for; for God wishes to give more than man cares to accept. Let us be ashamed of our past coldness and sloth. What a dignity it is that God grants us to be allowed to invoke Him in prayer—devout prayer strengthened by confidence in His love—prayer which is received by the Holy Angel and offered up to God! And we need this power, great as it is, and we must use it assiduously.

Why? Because we are poor and weak and prone to sin. Our need bids us turn to pray. And we have enemies too! The remembrance and fear of the strength, number, ceaseless vigilance, and cruelty of those enemies of our soul urge us to seek safety in the strength of prayer. We have enemies to fear, but the good God to trust in. Our prayers hitherto have not been the prayers that these enemies would fear, or that would satisfy Almighty God. For prayer, to be a real efficacious power, must be fervent, reverent, and constant. Then it will not only defend us from the enemy, but will also rouse our souls to earnestness and devotion.

For this—for a daily increase in zeal and piety—

let us learn how to address our prayers to God. First with fervour, for He is our loving Father. It is not in much praying that we are heard, but in the fervour of our hearts. And should not confidence arouse this fervour in us ?

And reverently we must pray—that is, from a heart which has already put away sin and attachment to it. "And whatsoever we shall ask, we shall receive of Him ; because we keep His commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in His sight." (1 John iii. 24.) How many past prayers of ours have been a failure for want of this reverence ? Sinfulness was only hiding, and not really banished from our hearts, and we wondered, and were saddened that God's grace would not come in.

Lastly, prayer to be a real power must be constant. Prayer is the spiritual breath of our souls. It is as necessary and must be as constant as the work of our lungs. We understand and see to our health ; we are very keen about the breath of life : we must be as keen about the breathing, the strong, deep, regular breathing of our souls.

Alas ! we do not pray thus with the fervour, reverence, constancy that we should. We pray mostly from custom, devout if we are in the humour, with little or no amendment or resolution to amend. God's goodness is waiting, ready to put His confidence in our hearts, but it must be joined to fervent, reverent, constant prayer to be the power that it should be with our Heavenly Father.

The Sunday after the Ascension

THE INNER LIFE

"Sanctify the Lord Christ in your hearts."—1 Pet. iii. 15.

1. All depends on the inner life of the soul.
2. How can we sanctify this inner life? By—
   (*a*) Remembering Christ;
   (*b*) Praying to Him;
   (*c*) Imitating Him.
3. By a daily pure intention all this may be brought about.

The Ascension, glorious as it was to our Blessed Lord, was the ultimate parting with His visible Presence on earth. The parting bids us keep His memory in our hearts. The lives of men seem for the most part very much the same. We cannot tell who are the good or who are the wicked—that depends on the inner life of the soul. And that inner life depends on this, do we "sanctify the Lord Christ in our hearts?" That we do by keeping His blessed memory as a motive and incentive to live for Him alone.

That His blessed memory should dwell in our hearts, it has to be cultivated. Continual and actual recalling a person or a circumstance can result in the presence, as it were, of that person dwelling as a living memory in our hearts. A good mother can understand this. And we hear of people that have such affection for each other

that, though separated, if one is suffering, the other is unhappy ; if one is in danger, the other is oppressed with fear ; if one is dying, he may appear to the other, or that other feel what is happening, and mention it. Poor Jesus Christ ! the Saints, we hope, had such a living, loving memory of Thee as this. But with our own selves days may come and go—yea, we may say prayers, go to the church, without the speaking memory of Jesus Christ awakening our hearts. Our inner life is in a lethargy. We must practise thinking of our Lord, meditating on His words, actions, events of His Life and Death. And by degrees His image will be imprinted on the retina of our soul, and develop more and more as we actually recall and study Him time after time.

And this remembering our Blessed Lord will have a great effect on our prayers. The great means of sanctification is prayer. Many people say plenty of prayers, but the quality is sadly deficient. Habit, repetition, hurry, reduce many prayers to a mere matter of form. And not steadying our mind before we begin is answerable for much poor, distracted prayer. St. James tells us to "ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, which is moved and carried about by the wind. Therefore let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." (Jas. i. 6, 7.) Before we begin, then, let us recall the memory of our Lord. Behold Him with the eyes of our soul, address Him, appeal to Him, watch Him. Such a remembering would make of our prayers a living cry that would make its way straight to the heart of Jesus. It is not the words we use, but the intensity, the fixity of purpose, the whole-heartedness with which we say them that makes the

power of prayer. Read prayers that the Saints have used, and perhaps we may see nothing special in them, and yet those very Saints may have worked miracles by those very words because their heart was in them.

Sanctify Christ in your hearts by thinking of Him, recalling Him, dwelling on His words and deeds—in one word, by having His memory enshrined there—and your prayers will become powerful and efficacious, and will ascend, sweet as incense, before the throne of God.

Then there is a third step in the inner life. Imitate Jesus Christ. Of course, we know that the imitation must be of the humblest kind—a long, long way off. But the publican stood a long way off, yet his prayer was pleasing unto God. So we too might trace the footsteps of Christ, and try to follow on slowly and laboriously. We must cultivate the same aims and interests; the things He loved we must try to love; the things He turned from we must hate and loathe and fear; the ways He had, patient, meek, humble, must be the ways that we must try to cultivate; the friends He had must be our friends too, and chief of all His Blessed Mother Mary. This is trying to be like, trying to imitate, our Lord and Master. And He that created us, when He sees that we are trying to improve, and even are taking Himself for a model, could He not, and will He not, with a blessing transform us more and more to His own image and likeness?

There is a simple, practical, direct way of starting all this, and carrying it on, from a very, very humble beginning to the real sanctity of the inner life: it is nothing more nor less than a pure intention. What was said of prayer can be said of a pure intention: we must make it, not through custom merely, but with the vivid memory of Christ our Lord before us. Then

that very offering, intention, transforms our daily life. Any form of prayer will do, but take, for example, the "morning offering" of the Apostleship of Prayer: "O Jesus, through the most pure heart of Mary, I offer Thee the prayers, work, and sufferings of this day, for all the intentions of Thy Divine Heart." Those few words, if said devoutly, and with the memory of Christ vividly before us, would consecrate a whole day to God, and make of it a prayer and sacrifice. It would raise up everything we do, and make it worthy of God's acceptance and reward.

It would be the inner life of each day. Our occupations and business would go on as usual, but in our hearts there would be the remembering, the praying to, the imitating Jesus Christ our Lord, because we had offered all our prayers and work and sufferings to Him. Then would begin the mystic circle of love. The more we loved our Lord, the oftener we should renew the pure intention and the offering, and the oftener we renewed it the more we should love Him. And thus the inner life would grow and be strengthened, and thus day by day we should "sanctify the Lord Christ in our hearts."

Pentecost

THE CHURCH DIVINE

"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost."—Acts ii. 4.

1. The Church divinely founded—
   (*a*) To propagate the teachings of Christ infallibly;
   (*b*) To last throughout all time;
   (*c*) To triumph over all evils.
2. We belong to this Divine Church:
   What gratitude, holiness, and courage should be ours!

The foundation of our faith in our Holy Church, my dear brethren, is this: that it is not the work of man, but of God. Neither Peter, nor Paul, nor any other ever claimed to be the founder of the Church. He was the Founder Who had proved His divinity by rising from the dead, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And He promised that the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete, should come down upon His disciples and teach them all truth.

And on this glorious festival of Pentecost we celebrate the fulfilment of this promise. Then were the Apostles transformed by the grace of God and fitted to carry on their Divine Master's work. All truth illumined their souls; they were strengthened in holiness; they had the courage given them to go forth and proclaim the good tidings of salvation. "The Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, Whom the Father will

send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you." (John xiv. 26.) "When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will teach you all truth. . . . The things that are to come He will show you. He shall glorify Me." (John xvi. 13, 14.) And our Blessed Lord, before leaving them, had prayed for the Apostles. He addresses His Heavenly Father: "I have given them Thy word, and the world hath hated them. I pray . . . that Thou shouldst keep them from evil. Sanctify them in truth. As Thou hast sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. . . . And not only for them do I pray, but for them also, who through their word shall believe in Me." (John xvii. 14-20.)

My dear brethren, not only were the Apostles equipped and commissioned to preach Christ crucified, to explain all the truths He had taught them, to remember whatsoever He had said, but the same Holy Spirit, Who had illuminated them, came to remain with the Church, to guide it and watch over it for ever. "I shall ask the Father, and He will give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you for ever: the Spirit of Truth, Whom the world cannot receive . . . but you shall know Him, because He shall abide with you." (John xiv. 16, 17.) So the Church to-day is guarded by the same Holy Spirit, by Whose power the Apostles were indoctrinated on the Day of Pentecost. Our Church teaches the same doctrines to-day as then; our Church is one and the same now as it was then, for the Holy Ghost—eternal God—is abiding with it yet.

To be of use to the souls of men, the Church of Christ had not only to cherish the truth within itself, but it

had to possess the power and strength to carry the word of truth throughout the world. It had to win over the Jew and the Gentile, to proclaim it in the temples of Athens and in the heart of pagan Rome, to explain it to barbarous nations, and subdue them to the yoke of Christ.

And this propagation of the truth from the very beginning stirred up the wrath of jealous men, the hatred of the world, the enmity of Satan. What strength would be of any avail to the Church except Divine strength, to enable it to start, to multiply, and at the same time to withstand and overcome the devil, the world, and the flesh? "All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth," said our Lord. (Matt. xxviii. 18.) Surely He gave that same power to His Church, as He commissioned His Apostles to go forth and teach all nations. Most surely has the Church been a witness to its Divine Founder "in the word of truth, in the power of God." (2 Cor. vi. 7.)

On this Day of Pentecost let us picture to ourselves the Church triumphant in heaven, the Apostles glorifying Almighty God on this the anniversary of their illumination, confirmation in grace, and commencement of their Gospel labours. The holy men and women who heard their words, and were baptized in Christ and strengthened with the Spirit, and who clung to Apostolic tradition, are praising God, too. And the martyrs, who so stood by the Faith, which they openly professed—the Holy Spirit speaking by their mouth—that they gladly died for it, exult before God this day. And the hermits and monks and virgins, and the holy confessors of Christ, are blessing God for the faith, the grace, the strength, that enabled them to despise all things here below,

and to make themselves the temples of the Holy Ghost.

Oh, ye glorious Saints, do more than praise God for your own blessedness! Think of us poor sinners, who are children of the same Divine Church. May we never disgrace it, may we never abandon it, in spite of all the world, the flesh, and the devil may do against us! By the grace of God we are the children of the same blessed Church, holding the same doctrines, offering the same prayers, fortified by the same Sacraments, redeemed by the same Lord, guided and illumined by the same Holy Spirit—and yet, alas! are we living witnesses to all this? Do we make manifest the Divine holiness of our Church in our lives?

What gratitude should be ours that we have this Divine faith, the greatest gift of God! We have not, could not, have merited it, but God in His mercy has bestowed it upon us. How we should treasure it and guard it, lest the sneers of the world should tarnish it, the sins of the flesh drive it from us, or the devil filch it from our careless, unheeding soul!

And with the faith should go holiness of life, proclaiming to all the holiness of the Church to which we belong, proving that it is powerful enough to keep its children "unspotted from this world." (Jas. i. 27.)

And we need courage, too, in these days of unbelief and open enmity to God and His Church—courage to profess our faith, which we should know well; courage to act up to our faith in all holy practices, in spite of the contempt of the ungodly; courage to stand up and defend the faith "in the word of truth, in the power of God." (2 Cor. vi. 7.)

Trinity Sunday

OUR NEIGHBOUR

"Forgive, and you shall be forgiven. Give, and it shall be given to you."—LUKE vi. 37, 38. (*From the Gospel of the First Sunday after Pentecost.*)

1. These two works of mercies correspond with the two graces we chiefly need from God.
2. Forgive:
   (*a*) We need forgiveness;
   (*b*) As we forgive, so are we forgiven;
   (*c*) No evading, no excuse;
   (*d*) So little to forgive, so much to be forgiven.
3. Give:
   (*a*) When we pray we are beggars; all depends on our being answered.
   (*b*) That answer depends on our giving to our neighbour—poor, relatives, souls in Purgatory.

Two most important works of mercy, my dear brethren, are spoken of by our Blessed Lord in this Gospel. To practise both is most necessary for each one of us, for only by fulfilling these works can we obtain from God the two corresponding graces for our own souls—two graces, without which not one of us can be saved—"Forgive, and you shall be forgiven; give, and it shall be given to you."

Our duty is summed up in the one word, "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful."

So we are compelled to forgive if we wish to be forgiven. And every one of us needs forgiveness. If we have sinned, we need forgiveness. And who is there without sin? "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (1 John i. 8.) "Who can say, My heart is pure; I am free from sin"? (Prov. xx. 9.)

Moreover, as we forgive, in the same proportion we shall be forgiven. My dear brethren, how many of us are barring the door of heaven against ourselves through this very fault! Our Blessed Lord says, "Judge not . . . condemn not, but forgive." We are far more ready to judge and condemn than we are to forgive. Naturally, it is hard to forgive, but by prayer, humility, meekness, we can learn, as the Saints did, to forgive from our hearts. But if in the past we have hardened our hearts by uncharitableness, envy, bearing malice, fancied grievances, what an obstacle we have built up to prevent our own souls from being forgiven! What a work we have before us!—a work impossible for us of ourselves, and only to be accomplished by His gracious help Who bids us learn of Him, for He is meek and humble of heart.

There is no evading this obligation. It is present and always present, lying at the threshold of our heart. "Forgive, and you shall be forgiven." There it is, and no excuse can be framed for us to escape from it. The Master has laid it down, and we must obey.

How indignant Almighty God must be when He finds us hesitating about it, and complaining that it is hard. Hard! and this from sinners, who should exult for joy that there is a loophole for them by which to escape from the judgment. Forgive your neighbour, and the

Good God has promised to forgive you. And you think it hard, the little you have to forgive. Look at the enormity of that for which we have to pray for forgiveness—mortal sin, a wilful, deliberate, and grievous offence against the Majesty of God. Measure its malice by what it did ; it crucified the Son of God. Measure it by what it does—plunges wretched souls, who will not forgive, that they may be forgiven, into the fire of hell. Humbly, and in the fear of God, let us pray day by day for this virtue of forgiving our neighbour from our heart, that so we may escape the wrath to come.

The second work of mercy spoken of by our Lord is, "Give, and it shall be given to you." My dear brethren, what is there that we have not received from God ? And how much more do we still hope to receive from Him ? Time, that we may not be cut off in our sins ; His graces—faith, hope, love ; the Sacraments of the Church, final perseverance, and a holy death—these and a thousand other favours we ask the merciful God to give us. When we pray we are veritable beggars, knocking at the door of our heavenly Father. If He hears us not, we are ruined ! If He refuses, to whom shall we go ? We are destitute and powerless of ourselves. And He will be deaf to us, and He will refuse us, prostrate and in tears though we may be, unless we remember one word, one blessed word that He has said : "Give, and it shall be given to you." "Give" is the golden key that opens the treasure-house of God. "Give," and the Almighty cannot refuse you when you pray and beseech of Him.

Is it not plain and evident what God would have us do ? There are the poor, the sick, neighbours in distress and sorrow, our children or aged parents, as

the case may be—yea, and the dying and the souls in Purgatory, all asking help from us. It is not necessarily money that they need—though in that case it is often the poor who are the most generous—but kindness in word and deed, patience, good example, prayers, remembrance. As we treat others, and give them of our means and neighbourly love, so God will treat us. Listen to the words of Scripture, and you will understand the spirit that should animate you. "Give alms out of thy substance"—thus Tobias admonishes his son—"and turn not away thy face from any poor person, for so it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned from thee. According to thy ability, be merciful. If thou hast much, give abundantly; if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little. For thus thou storest up to thyself a good reward for the day of necessity. For alms deliver from all sin and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness. Alms shall be a great confidence before the most high God to all them that give it." (Tobias iv. 7-12.) "He that is inclined to mercy shall be blessed; for of his bread he hath given to the poor." (Prov. xxii. 9.) "Shut up alms in the heart of the poor, and it shall obtain help for thee against all evil." (Ecclus. xxix. 15.)

"Give, and it shall be given to you." Oh, the mercy of God! the little we have to give and the greatness of that which God gives to us! A little bread, a few pence, a kind word, an hour spent with the sick and the dying, is all that we can do. But the Lord blesses it, and a good conscience and the peace of God, and graces innumerable, and plenteous redemption and life everlasting are God's generous return.

Sunday within the Octave of Corpus Christi

EXCUSES FROM FREQUENT COMMUNION

"And they began all at once to make excuse."—LUKE xiv. 18.

1. The Festival of Corpus Christi is the Great Supper.
2. The excuses founded on the common sins—pride, avarice, luxury.
3. But, we add, our excuse is unworthiness. Examined and found to be not valid.
4. There is still room; obedience, confidence, faith, love, compel us to come in.

THE Gospel and the Festival are well in unison to-day. Corpus Christi, my dear brethren, must of necessity lose much of its grandeur and solemnity in a non-Catholic country, where churches and congregations for the most part are small and the clergy but few. But to us, at least, is left that which is essential to the solemnity. What would all the outward show be worth—the pomp, the processions, the crowded cathedrals, the reverential crowds of worshippers—if the hearts of men were not united to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament? The hour our Blessed Lord loves most is that early, quiet hour when the silent throng gathers round the altar-rails. What would the Festival of Corpus Christi be if there were no Com-

munions ? We can all make a festival for our Lord in our hearts if we choose.

Yet the point of the Gospel is the excuses that they all began to make, and the insistence of the master that other guests should be found. "And they began all at once to make excuse." That this is the truth, that it will be the work of the ministers of the Church till the end of time to compel them to come in, we can make no doubt, for the God of Truth spoke the parable.

Men still love the things of earth more than those of heaven. What they see and can grasp and enjoy has a hold on them, but the things of faith are swept aside.

Pride makes the first excuse. Too taken up with things of their own—their possessions, their homes—they have not time for God. They neglect either to obey or serve Him, and when reminded by the invitation wilfully disobey the summons, and hypocritically pray to be excused. And avarice follows the example of pride. It wants to see that it has got the value of its money : "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to try them." This short life engrosses all their interests, and they take no heed that there is an eternal life to come. "The rich man when he shall sleep shall take away nothing with him ; he shall open his eyes and find nothing." (Job xxvii. 19.) "The desire of money is the root of all evils ; which some coveting have erred from the faith, and have entangled themselves in many sorrows." (1 Tim. vi. 10.)

And luxury, the enthralment of carnal pleasures, takes such possession of a man that he has not the manners to say, "Pray hold me excused," but bluntly, "I cannot come." "For all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of

the eyes, and the pride of life . . . and the world passeth away." (1 John ii. 16, 17.)

Can no better excuses be found why men abstain from Holy Communion than such as these—that pride, avarice, sensuality, are masters of their soul, which disowns allegiance to Jesus Christ? Those, who approach Holy Communion but seldom, may feel offended to find that the pretext that keeps them away is spoken of thus. Each one tries to persuade himself that he indeed has a very good reason for so seldom receiving the Blessed Eucharist. The usual one is the plea of unworthiness. It is true; it sounds well; but it is a mere pretext and a sham.

Test it. What do you do to become less unworthy? Delay will help you nothing. Remaining in a tepid, sluggish state cannot improve you. Here is the Bread of Life, and your soul is starving! Does not common sense force you to remember the words of our Blessed Lord: "This is the Bread which cometh down from heaven, that if any man eat of it he may not die. . . . If any man eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever"? (John vi. 50, 52.)

What else can give you spiritual life and strength as well as this Bread of Life? And did not He Who instituted the Blessed Eucharist well know our unworthiness, and has He left no means with His Church to do away with our unworthiness? The Sacrament of Penance will wash away the sins which indeed make us unworthy to partake of the Body and Blood of the Lord. Even then, indeed, what are we? Let us own it—we are amongst "the poor and the feeble, and the blind, and the lame"; but remember the Lord had those brought into His supper, and welcomed them. If we are waiting to be brought in

as honoured guests, we are making a great mistake; we are not indeed worthy of that.

What we must do is, having carefully repented of our sins, to own our unworthiness and forthwith approach the Lord in obedience, confidence, faith, and love—obedience, because the invitation is a summons, and no excuse will be received; confidence, because a precept of the Church emphasizes the wish of the Lord, and the command is laid on sinners; faith, because we know the Holy Eucharist continues and carries on the work of the Incarnation, and Christ came "to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke xix. 10.) And love! How can we help but love when we reflect Who it is that we receive in Holy Communion; how it is that we receive Him under the appearance of bread; why it is we receive Him, that He may feed and nourish our souls, that we may live by Him? What a union! Need we speak of love? The great God gives Himself to the poorest and the worst of sinners.

Where, then, is this excuse of unworthiness? It is swept away by faith and confidence, obedience and love. To stay away because unworthy, and to do nothing to become less unworthy, is an insult to God. But to approach Holy Communion in a true and humble Catholic spirit, confessing our unworthiness, but trusting that every Communion will lessen our unworthiness, is indeed giving glory to God and enriching our own souls with the choicest of blessings.

Third Sunday after Pentecost

GOD'S CARE FOR EACH INDIVIDUAL SOUL

"There shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance."—LUKE xv. 7.

1. Each single soul loved and cared for by God.
2. Realized easily from the parable of the Lost Sheep.
3. The strength and comfort that we are not alone in life's battle.
4. St. Peter's encouragement from the Epistle.

THIS chapter of St. Luke, my dear brethren, begins, "Now the publicans and sinners drew near unto Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." And immediately Jesus took up their word, and showed how God does receive sinners, and how He has a tender care of each individual one, by the parable of the sheep that was lost.

The Gospel leaves no room for doubt on this point, and it is well for us lovingly to realize it. What ruin is brought on those who doubt or disbelieve it! The young and the careless, timid and miserable, after their first falls into grievous sin, seeing that nothing has come of it, are tempted to think that God has not the care and the watchfulness over them that they had been taught to believe. At first they affect bravery they do not feel, but by degrees their conscience

grows callous, and they say with the fool, "There is no God." The despondent, relapsing sinner and the poor penitent, after years of wandering—are they not tempted to think that God has given them up, has no interest in them, that individually they are lost from before His sight? What a blessing and a help do they lose who doubt or disbelieve that God has a special, loving care for their own individual soul!

Would that such might take this parable of the sheep that was lost and think it out. He spoke Who was doing this very thing for each of our erring souls. "What man of you that hath an hundred sheep: and if he shall lose one of them, doth he not leave the ninety-nine in the desert, and go after that which was lost until he find it? And when he hath found it, lay it upon his shoulders, rejoicing; and coming home, call together his friends and his neighbours, saying to them, Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost"? Then our Lord speaks straight to the heart of each of us, revealing the parable in its own true light. "I say to you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance." Who can be so blind of heart as not to recognize his own wilful soul in that erring, lost sheep? or ungrateful enough not to acknowledge Who that faithful Shepherd is Who has searched for him in the foul ways of sin, and when He found him, lay him upon His shoulders, no reproaching, chiding, but rejoicing—actually rejoicing—that he was found and could be brought home in safety?

The past tells us how true this is, and has been many and many a time. What has been done in the past, when we knew not and cared not, we may be quite certain will be done for us in the future, if we

turn to God, do penance, and strive to keep from sin. Yet so many are cowards, as they look forward to the struggle and battle of life. But there is the mistake: we are not all alone and left to our own feeble resources in this striving against evil and temptation. The Shepherd is there, and it is our own wilful disobedience and self-will that leads us astray. If we wander, then we shall be alone, then we are sure to come to grief. Even with the Shepherd near us, oftentimes we shall stumble and fall and be hurt, till we grow weary and disheartened. It seems always going back to Confession in shame and confusion, with the same list of mean and petty and selfish offences, even when we have thought that we had tried our best. But, oh! if we have grown despondent and reckless, how much more grievous the falls we have to own to! Then it is that our Lord's most gracious words re-echo in our souls, "There shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance." How many, in heaven now, are there from having taken comfort and strength from these blessed words! They have known what it is to lose heart, to think that they are all alone in the struggle, that it is of care to no one what becomes of them; but the figure of the Shepherd has appeared before them in the gloom, they have felt His strong, loving hands lift them and place them on His shoulders and bear them home. May we ever think of Him thus, and remember His consoling words!

God, then, has a loving care of each of us, and wants us to play a manly part ourselves in life. And the great penitent, over whom once the angels had rejoiced, St. Peter himself, in the Epistle, tells us how to do it. We have to quit ourselves like men, but not as if we did it of our own power. No; "Be you

humbled," he says, "casting all your solicitude upon Him, for He hath care of you." He tells us of the enemy, not to intimidate, but that we might be alert and "watch, whom resist ye strong in faith." And he would have us know that we have to suffer and so win our way to heaven. "The God of all grace, when you have suffered a little, will Himself perfect, and confirm, and establish you." (1 Pet. v. 6-10.)

The soldier in the battle knows not the plans and stratagems of the chief, knows not how the victory is turning, nor how it has been won. He has only to obey, be brave, be patient. So it is with us: God is watching us, and sees the daily conflict between our souls and evil. Let us put all our trust in Him; He will have care of us. St. Bernard says: "The devil suggests evil, we refuse consent; and as often as we resist we overcome the Evil One, rejoice the angels, honour God, Who excites us to fight, helps us to conquer, and strengthens us lest we fail."

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

SUFFERING AND REWARD

"For I reckon, that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come."—Rom. viii. 18.

1. The experience of the Saints, as well as faith, bid us to trust these words.
2. The sufferings—
   (*a*) Are only for a time;
   (*b*) If patiently borne, expiate sin;
   (*c*) Prove our love for Christ;
   (*d*) Bless us with courage and patience.
3. The glory: what this includes; even our bodies, risen again, partake of it.

We are not asked, my dear brethren, to take these words on faith merely and live up to them as an experiment; but we can look to the lives of the Saints, and be convinced of their truth from their experience. Apostles, martyrs, fathers of the desert, missionaries, monks, and nuns, all gladly give testimony to their truth. And they would have us learn from them that, however long and great and countless were their sufferings and tribulations, however excruciating the tortures of the martyrs, by comparison with eternal glory they were of no account at all.

We are often afraid of things without a reason. Objects in a mist seem larger and different to what

they really are ; so let us, like business men, reckon up the sufferings of this time, that we may not be afraid of them as if we were children, but learn how to make the best of them, for that sufferings must come is inevitable.

Take the words "the sufferings of this time." This time ? And how long is this time ? Very short and fleeting indeed, and compared to eternity, merely momentary. That is the first encouragement and consolation. And if we are soldiers of Christ, need we grumble if the campaign is an arduous one, if our leader promises that it shall be short ?

These sufferings likewise, if patiently borne, expiate our sins and the punishments due to sin. The prayer after the words of Absolution asks that not only what good we may have done, but what evil or misery we have borne, may be to us to the remission of sins, the increase of grace, and the reward of eternal life.

And if borne humbly and patiently, these sufferings prove our love for Him Who bore the sufferings of the cross for us. We know, we feel, that we are Christ's own—His very own—if willingly we suffer for Him. When our Lord bids us follow Him, He makes no concealment of the fact that we shall have to suffer. Find a Saint in the whole calendar who had not to suffer. No, not one. They did not expect it, they did not wish it, for "Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps." (1 Pet. ii. 21.)

Grasp a nettle, and it stings you not. So manfully take sufferings from the hand of God, and there is such a blessing in that willingness that they are sufferings no longer. Courage and patience so transform us that, poor sinners though we are, we rise superior to trials, calamities, and anguish. Remember

the Saints—how flames became as roses, and the rack and the scourge could not silence their hymns of joy.

Reckoned up, the sufferings of this time need not be so greatly dreaded; and remember sufferings are the seeds of glory—the glory to come; the reward of present suffering for God and in obedience to God. "You shall rejoice with an unspeakable and glorified joy, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." (1 Pet. i. 8, 9.) The joys, rewards, riches, delights, and honour of this glory cannot even be enumerated, let alone realized in this life, this vale of tears. Before this exile is ended, before the pilgrimage is finished, the glory of the fatherland is bursting through the gloom. Whilst Saint Stanislaus was dying, Our Lady and countless Angels were seen by those around waiting to take his soul to God; when St. Chad lay dying, the monks in his cell heard the Angels singing; and St. Nicholas of Tolentino, to reward him for his struggles and the sufferings and attacks of the devil, each night for six months before he died heard the angelic choir, giving him by its sweetness a foretaste of the joys of Paradise. How true, "as it is written, That eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love Him." (1 Cor. ii. 9.) The vision of God's majesty! the beholding, face to face, Christ and His Virgin Mother! the intimate companionship and friendship of angels and glorious Saints of God! We ourselves to be one with them in joyful and peaceful security, all work accomplished, all trials over, the battle won, the restfulness of victory for evermore.

Even these poor bodies of ours—and rightly, too,

for they have suffered—after the judgment-day will rise again, beautiful, glorified, satiated with every joy. How paltry, momentary, will then seem the labours, poverty, pains, disappointments, weariness, heart-breakings, that these very bodies have endured in life! As St. Gregory says, "What tongue can express, what intellect grasp, how great are the joys of the heavenly city; to mingle with the choirs of angels; to stand with the blessed Spirits before the glory of the Creator; to behold and gaze upon the countenance of God, free from all breath of fear or of death, glorifying in reward and in immortality?" Yes, all this glory is for ever and for ever. The sufferings are for this time, the glory is for ever. How can the sufferings, then, be compared to the glory that is to come! "For which cause we faint not . . . for that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure an exceeding weight of glory." (2 Cor. iv. 16, 17.)

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

THE LIFE OF THE SOUL

"Alive unto God in Christ Jesus our Lord."—Rom. vi. 11.

1. The contrast—the care taken of our bodily health, the neglect of our soul.
2. If we could only see our souls, with their diseases—viz., our sins and bad habits.
3. The danger of being content, unless our souls are alive and vigorous.
4. The great means to keep in health, the same for body and soul; food.

How sad a thing for our angel guardians it must be, my dear brethren, to witness, day after day, the care lavished on our bodily health, the indifference and neglect of the state of our soul! Are we content to be just alive? No, we realize thoroughly what life means. Life means health, strength, perfect repair, power to fulfil our duties and enjoy our existence. We cannot always secure all this, but we try all we know and all we can to encompass it. What trouble, self-denial, actual sufferings, we willingly endure to keep our health, strength, and as much as we can of that which makes up life! How quick to note symptoms of disease, signs of decay, of weakness, of the approach of old age! How careful we are that little things be

taken in time lest grave and painful disorders ensue! What sadness, what anxiety one word from a doctor can give us! People never tire talking of their ailments, trying new remedies; trouble and expense are nothing if they can only secure their health.

And yet this body of ours is only meant to last a few years, but the soul within us is destined to exist for all eternity. God lays no store on the state of our body, strong or weak, old or young, emaciated or pampered, beautiful or repulsive. The soul can wing its flight to heaven, when death comes, from any kind of a body; there will be no difference between poor and rich very soon after death.

What is all-important to us, however, is to keep our souls in health and strength, in vigour, in cleanliness, and beauty. And, alas! most men never give a thought to this. For most men ignore God and the remembrance of the other life. And we ourselves, who do pray and attend the Church and frequent the Sacraments—the thought of our souls is forced on us then—how little time and thought do we give to the life and health of our immortal souls! It is not a pleasant subject, it is very irksome; for there is always some complaint, some disease that one cannot help noticing, and the symptoms frequently are of the gravest.

But thank God, we say, nobody else knows! There is the confessor, of course, but he is bound to secrecy. What consternation there would be if all our souls were laid bare one to another! What a ghastly assemblage it would be! My dear brethren, our souls will be laid bare some day, and that very soon. They will be just the same neglected, miserable, starved, and sickly souls then that they are now, unless at once we take heed to them, and give them some of the care

that we waste upon our bodies. It is our sins and our bad habits that are their diseases.

The danger is that so many may say, "Oh, we are not so bad; of course, we have our faults, but not deadly sins, we hope." Do not be self-satisfied, and do not deceive yourselves. St. John was bidden to write to one of the Bishops, as we read in the Apocalypse: "Thou sayest, I am rich and made wealthy, and have need of nothing; and knowest not, that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." (iii. 17.) We have not given ourselves leisure to understand the diseases of the soul and their dangers. They do not run the ordinary course of ailments, for, first, there is not enough care taken of them by ourselves; and secondly, they are aggravated—blood-poisoning, mortification, sets in through the agency of the devil. We must indeed be anxious and watchful over our souls if we would have them saved.

Do not think that all this is to humiliate or make you miserable. My dear brethren, the remedy is at hand. Our souls can be alive, and live strong, healthy, vigorous unto God, and how? "In Christ Jesus our Lord." Food is the great requisite to keep the body in life and health, and for our souls it is the same. And the good Lord hath provided it for us. All that is done for corporal life by meat and drink—to sustain, cause growth, repair loss of strength, to keep in health—is done for the soul by the Most Holy Eucharist. "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven; that if any man eat of it, he may not die. . . . If any man eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever." (John vi. 50, 52.) Holy Communion is the life of our soul unto God, through Him Whom we receive, Christ Jesus our Lord. Then Christ liveth in us—in our thoughts,

senses, impulses, will, the activity of our soul. Frequent Communion is the daily bread for the removal of daily infirmity, for the providing daily growth and daily activity. Shall we not, then, take an interest in our souls, and see that they are in such health that they can assimilate this food and receive strength and growth and vigour from it? What a blessed chance we have of living unto God! Will not the carefulness, the self-denial, the pains that worldlings take over their bodies shame us and condemn us if our souls are found at judgment neglected, starved, and wretched? Let us imitate the Saints, whose one desire and aim and endeavour was to cherish their souls in all sinlessness and fervour "alive unto God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

CHRIST'S COMPASSION

"I have compassion on the multitude."—MARK viii. 2.

1. God's power shown especially in His compassion.
2. God's compassion shown—
   In allowing us to exist in spite of our sins;
   In drawing us to Him;
   In forgiving and bestowing graces.
3. Let us be grateful for God's continued compassion.
4. How to make sure of it—listen to Him, follow Him, stay with Him.

THE almighty power of God, my dear brethren, is especially manifested in His compassion and forgiveness. We are taught that the justification of the wicked is a greater work of God than the creation of the world. And the justification of the wicked is peculiarly the work of His compassion.

Let us try to learn to-day to reverence and be grateful for the compassion of God, which envelopes us all our life long, and which protects us day after day, and in so many various ways.

In the first place, it is the compassion of God that allows us to exist. Do we not look upon that as a right? He has created us, so surely He will allow us to exist. Yes, if we are good and obedient creatures; but as we are rebels through sin, as we have provoked

God so frequently by our self-will and disobedience, have we any claim on His goodness? We ourselves discard useless things, then why should not God discard us, if we do not answer to the end of our creation? Simply because He is compassionate. He is even beneficent to the wicked as well as to the good. "Is it My will that a sinner should die? saith the Lord, and not that he be converted from his ways and live?" (Ezek. xviii. 23.)

Again, God's compassion is unceasingly drawing us to Him. Nothing happens by chance in this world, but God's providence arranges all, watches over us, protects us, draws us to Himself. "For He hath given His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." (Ps. xc. 11.) "Therefore the Lord waiteth that He may have mercy on you, and therefore shall He be exalted, sparing you. . . . Weeping, thou shalt not weep. He will surely have pity on thee. At the voice of thy cry as soon as He shall hear, He will answer thee." (Isa. xxx. 18, 19.) "The Lord dealeth patiently for your sake, not willing that any should perish." (2 Pet. iii. 9.) How we can look back and find how God has arranged the events of our lives simply to lead us to Himself! The Father would have His children with Him, and towards the erring ones His compassion is the more solicitous.

If in His general providence God is compassionate, how much more so is He in His treatment of penitents and forgiving poor sinners! For what does the forgiveness of a sinner mean? Not only that he, whose soul was dead in sin, is raised to life; that the guilt which entailed eternal punishment is forgiven; but that grace is bestowed upon that soul. It means that he who a little while before was vile and loathsome in

countless and appalling sins has, through the compassion of His heavenly Father, received the robe of innocence, and is decked out in graces purchased for him by his Saviour. The Father's eye looks upon him with love. Not only does He adorn that soul, but visits it, embraces it, unites Himself with it. "Where sin abounded, grace did more abound." (Rom. v. 20.) If thus we could be forgiven once and restored to God's favour, how grateful we should be! Once is it, or seven times, or seventy times seven? Oh, my dear brethren, we can say with David: "Thy mercy will follow me all the days of my life." (Ps. xxii. 6.) And our poor hearts know how true that is!

If God's compassion is such, let us not, my dear brethren, be cold and ungrateful. Loving Him from our hearts, let us work for Him and obey Him with all diligence and gratitude, perseveringly and unweariedly. From the miracle in the Gospel to-day we know how Christ was moved with compassion because the crowd was wearied and hungry. How much more compassionate will He be for our souls, fainting and yearning for His help! "For we have not a High Priest Who cannot have compassion on our infirmities. . . . Let us go, therefore, with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid." (Heb. iv. 15, 16.)

Moreover, we can learn from the Gospel how to make sure of Christ's compassion. Listen to Him, follow Him, stay with Him. The crowd had done this, and, looking on it, His Sacred Heart welled over with love, and He said: "I have compassion on the multitude." St. Mark tells us: "In those days again there was a great multitude, and they had nothing to eat; calling His disciples together, He saith to them: I

have compassion on the multitude, for behold they have now been with Me three days, and have nothing to eat. And if I shall send them away fasting to their homes, they will faint in the way, for some of them came from afar off." (Mark viii. 1-3.)

Three days listening to His Divine discourses, the tones of His voice vibrating through their hearts, their eyes feasting on His blessed countenance—no wonder they forgot that they had no food. Our duty is less interesting and exciting, and works up but little enthusiasm within us ; but we, too, must listen to and obey His words recorded in the Gospels, explained by the Church through its priests. His doctrine and counsels must hold sway over our hearts and rule our life, so that we follow Him. And let us pray that He will graciously allow us to stay with Him. He will not send us away empty, but strengthen us with the Bread of Life, the greatest gift of His Divine compassion. Our very helplessness and weakness will extort His mercy. We have come from afar off ; let us wander no more, but listen to Him, follow Him, and stay with Him.

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

HYPOCRISY

"Not every one that saith to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven."—MATT. vii. 21.

1. Some subjects almost useless—they do not affect Church-goers; but not so hypocrisy.
2. What is hypocrisy?
3. How hateful to God seen from our Lord's denunciations.
4. How few not tainted with this vice.
5. How to be free from it.

SOME sermons, my dear brethren, are almost useless, as the subject-matter in no way suits those present in the church. But the subject to-day is eminently practical; for though, my dear brethren, it may sound rude to say it, and uncomfortable for you to own it, yet hypocrisy is chiefly the vice of church-goers.

Listen to our Blessed Lord's own words, and you will see what class of men He was addressing: "Not every one that saith to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. . . . Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and cast out devils, and done miracles? And then I will profess to them, I never knew you; depart from Me, you that work iniquity." (Matt. vii. 21-23.) It was the Pharisees our Lord was addressing. Notice, "Lord, Lord," and yet He calls them

workers of iniquity. Uncomfortable reflection that it is, hypocrisy is a vice under the cloak of piety and religion.

For what is hypocrisy? It is the opposite to sincerity and truth. It is acting a part. It is seeming to be far better than we are. A hypocrite pretends to be what he is not. He hides his wickedness under the mask of religion. His hypocrisy steals into and vitiates even his good deeds—his prayers, attending church, giving alms—all these he does that he may be thought holy! Alas! then, even his good deeds are worse than worthless; they are evil, because done with an evil intention. For the hypocrite ignores God and His just judgments, and seeks only the good opinion and esteem of men. And what a foolish vice it is! A hypocrite performs his good deeds, takes trouble over them for human praise, transitory honour, and forgoes for such vain and frivolous and perishable gain the hope of eternal reward. Hypocrisy is the seed of the devil; deadly poison; blindness of heart and infinite folly. A hypocrite does not blush to lie to God, and to pretend to be before men the opposite to what he is before the eye of God. He shows, therefore, that he thinks more of pleasing men than God; prefers to be well thought of by them than by the All-Wise Judge. The hypocrite, in fact, has lost the fear of being branded by God as a liar and a deceiver.

God is Truth, and hates a lie, and hypocrisy is a living lie. We are not surprised, then, to find that our Blessed Lord denounces hypocrisy specially, frequently, and terribly. He Who has nothing but kind words and forgiveness for poor sinners, a message of mercy for the lepers, and relief for those tormented by the devil, launches out into invective when face to

face with a hypocrite. How many times in the Gospel the rebuke of our Lord rings out, "Ye hypocrites!" "And when ye pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites, that love to stand and pray in the synagogues and corners of the streets that they may be seen by men. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward." (Matt. vi. 5.) And the same He says of their alms-deeds and fasting. And in the twenty-third chapter of the same Gospel of St. Matthew is one long denunciation of hypocrites. "Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites . . . praying long prayers . . . so you also outwardly indeed appear to men just, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. . . . You serpents, generation of vipers, how will you flee from the judgment of hell?"

Is not this anger of our Lord a most eloquent proof of God's hatred of hypocrisy? This sin, though vain and foolish, is also vile and vicious and deadly. And yet, alas! St. Bernard tells us there are very few, very few, who are totally free from it. For nearly every one excuses and palliates their sins, and wish to appear better than they are, and in doing good are frequently tarnished with vainglory, have an empty self-complacency, instead of seeking solely and purely the honour of God. This malignant disease, says the same Saint, eats its way through the whole body of the Church, and is all the more dangerous because hidden and secret.

Face the truth, my dear brethren; it is not pleasant, but it is wise to be humble. We may be far greater hypocrites than we have hitherto imagined. Self-love and the devil have hoodwinked us. If our neighbours had to dissect our characters, what a judgment of hypocrisy would be pronounced against us!

But it is not our neighbours; it is, remember, the All-Wise God, Who sees all things, to Whom nothing is hidden, is our Judge, and that no one is better than God sees him to be. Remember this, and we shall then detest and cast aside hypocrisy, vainglory, and seeking the good opinion and esteem of men. Instead of pretence and craftiness, we shall cultivate simplicity and holy fear. Let us be honest and humble, and own that we are in truth the wretched sinners that God knows we are. Let us realize how foolish and dangerous it is to seek pleasure in human praise, to long to be thought much of, because by this we not only lose the friendship of God and eternal reward, but merit eternal condemnation. And if we have sought honour and esteem, and a name for goodness and piety, alas! our everlasting confusion and disgrace will be all the more overwhelming; for it is not the esteem of men, hypocritically gained, but the verdict of the divine Judge, which will decide our fate for all eternity.

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

THE LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOUR

"He gave to every one of them commandment concerning his neighbour."—Ecclus. xvii. 12.

1. The keeping or breaking the Commandments is from love or the want of love.
2. We sin against our neighbour by thought, deed, and word.
3. Is there any benefit from uncharitableness?
4. Keeping the commandment concerning our neighbour the short and safe way to heaven.

Seven out of the Ten Commandments, my dear brethren, regard our neighbour, and they are all fulfilled or broken by love or the want of love. The Fourth Commandment regards the tenderest ties of the nearest and dearest neighbours—parents and their children. The honour and obedience demanded from children must be founded on love; and the unwearied self-sacrifice of parents, in caring for and working for their children, finds all its strength and unwearied perseverance in love. The want of love shatters the Fifth Commandment. The Sixth is broken by unholy and unbridled love—the blessed gift of God perverted and polluted! Unbridled, selfish love, again, leads us to break the Seventh Commandment. We wrong our neighbour because we love some paltry gain more than

him ; and could we break the Eighth Commandment and malign our neighbour and ruin his good name unless all love for him had died out in our hearts ? And the Ninth and Tenth Commandments are broken, too, through the smouldering fire of wicked, selfish, sensual love in our souls.

We sin, then, against our neighbour by thought, word, or deed ; and the root of all these sins is the want of love or unholy and unbridled love.

Indulging in uncharitable thoughts is one of the meanest of sins. Perhaps we are smiling, polite, pretending even to be kind and friendly, and at the same moment rash-judging, envious, or wishing evil to our neighbour. What shame would overwhelm us, if our hypocrisy were laid bare and our thoughts revealed !

There is no check upon our thoughts, because they are hidden and secret ; but there is a certain check upon our uncharitable deeds. We only indulge in them if we dare, and as far as we dare. Fortunately, the law steps in and protects our neighbour, or our neighbour might retaliate. So uncharitableness seeks for safety and secrecy for its ill-natured actions. The anonymous letter is the favourite weapon with which the uncharitable stab their victim—a poisoned weapon, too, tipped with the venom of envy and malice. How many a good name ruined, a fair prospect blighted, a happy home made desolate, through an anonymous letter ! The poor victims, are their sins their own, or shall not some one else have to bear the brunt of God's anger against them ? The anger, desire of revenge, the heart's curse against the malignant, secret enemy—dreadful sins, indeed ; but is not the enemy far more guilty than the victim ?

We may sin against charity by thought and deed,

but it is in word we sin the most. The tongue runs riot in uncharitableness, and yet we have the commandment to love our neighbour as ourselves. Most uncharitable words and talk are scarcely deliberate. They seem to rise from our ill-kept hearts like gnats on a summer's evening, in myriads, in perpetual motion. Even these are stinging and unpleasant and irritating, but what shall be said of those which are uttered coldly, cruelly, and with the wish to stab? Men and women who indulge in such malicious, envious conversation are the agents of the devil. They are not always, or perhaps even mostly, aware of the unkindness of their words, or how they rancour, or even of the deadly wound they have inflicted; but it is the arch-calumniator, the father of lies, who has started and fostered and corrupted their foolish or unkind talk. And the victim of it is perhaps some one who is easily downcast and disheartened; or some one who has been to Holy Communion, and this jarring note dispels their piety and recollection; or some one who finds it hard to keep good, and yet who is trying his bravest, and this uncharitableness comes as a cruel recompense for his endeavours. The misery and unhappiness occasioned by the tongue!

Surely people do not commit sin for nothing! What, then, is the benefit of want of charity to our neighbour? If it is envy, where is the pleasure or profit? Envy eats our own hearts out. The Scripture tells that the envious man can be recognized by his face—the window from which his cankered heart looks out.

If it is by uncharitable words we sin, those that hear us, join with us even, fear us and dislike us. They know well that, as soon as their backs are turned,

we shall say the same of them ; that our tongue will whip them as it has just whipped others. What good, what profit, what happiness is there to be got from uncharitable talk ?

And if it is in deed we sin, we know that we shall have the shame and bitterness of making amends for it before we can be forgiven. What toil and misery we are preparing for ourselves in the work of repentance ! And who shall tell of the remorse, the futility of the remorse, of those who are lost through sins of uncharitableness ?

On the other hand, my dear brethren, if we would have a happy life, and find a short and easy way to heaven, keep the commandment concerning your neighbour. "My dearest," says St. John the Evangelist, "if God hath so loved us, we also ought to love one another." (1 John iv. 11.) "And this commandment we have from God, that he, who loveth God, love also his brother." (1 John iv. 21.) Without guile, without dissimulation in thought, word, or deed, let us be children of our Heavenly Father, Who has given to every one of us commandment concerning our neighbour.

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

THE DAY OF MERCY; THE DAY OF VENGEANCE

"Seeing the city, He wept over it."—LUKE xix. 41.

1. The Gospel narrative.
2. Who were in the city? His enemies, encompassing His Death; yet Christ wept over it.
3. Recalling this compassion should move—
   (*a*) The careless and the wicked;
   (*b*) The ordinary Christian;
   (*c*) The earnest and the pious.
4. "In this thy day" of mercy! For what draws near? "These are the days of vengeance."

ON what day was it, my dear brethren, that our Lord, seeing the city, wept over it? It was Palm Sunday. "And when He was now coming near the descent of Mount Olivet, the whole multitude of His disciples began with joy to praise God with a loud voice, for all the mighty works they had seen, saying: Blessed be the King Who cometh in the name of the Lord, peace in heaven and glory on high. And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said to Him: Master, rebuke Thy disciples. To whom He said: I say to you, if these shall hold their peace, the stones will cry out. And when He drew near, seeing the city, He wept over it." (Luke xix. 37-41.)

Oh, Jerusalem had had its day of mercy! but it had

not known the time of its visitation. The more mercy received, the more holiness expected; the more mercy rejected, the greater the judgment!

For who were in the city when Christ wept over it? Very many to whom He had done good; friends, relatives, neighbours of those He had cured, besides the number of those themselves who were now rejoicing in eyesight, hearing, strength and health of limb and body through His miraculous kindness—all these, how readily were they to abandon Him five days hence, when the humiliation of His Passion came upon Him! Besides these, there were His enemies plotting His Death. They had shut their eyes to the proofs of His Divine Mission; they had perverted the very words of wisdom and of mercy. Their day of grace had been, and they had not known it, and now they were scheming the death of the Author of life, and so bringing destruction upon themselves.

And Jesus wept over that city, which had shown itself resolute not to accept God's mercy. No one can recall this Divine compassion without being moved.

It would do good to the careless, and even to the wicked, if they would only let themselves dwell on it. They can see in Jerusalem the type of themselves—so many graces, mercies, favours, and no return; God slighted, irritated, denied even by His own creatures. No one can hope to be treated with more long-suffering patience than was Jerusalem by Almighty God. Yet there was an end of His mercy. It had not known the day of its visitation. It had to endure the days of vengeance. "For there shall be then great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, neither shall be." (Matt. xxiv. 21.)

And we ourselves, ordinary commonplace Catholics,

can learn a wholesome lesson, too, from this contrast of God's mercy and God's vengeance. In the past, every one of us has misused God's mercy and grace in various ways. We each can look back and find much to grieve over. And do we find ourselves stricter now, or are we more lax and careless? Do we not think little now of temptations, of falls, which once made us anxious and miserable? If so, be fearful and humble. We are misusing the mercy of God. There will be need of pardon more and more. We may not have the grace to seek it, and God's long-suffering patience may be ended. There is yet time, but not time to delay. God does not wish us to be lost. Remember, and thank God for the remembrance. Jesus wept over the city, showing how unwilling He was to say, "The day of mercy is over, and these are the days of vengeance."

Even the earnest and the pious, even, my dear brethren, the Saints themselves, have studied this lesson again and again; for the holier we are, the more humble, and we think so much of our faults and failings that we class ourselves with the greatest sinners. Moreover, to make up for the utter neglect of so many, we should nerve ourselves by this thought of the day of mercy and the day of vengeance to do our very utmost for so good a Lord. The tears of Christ call for the tenderest love and most strenuous endeavours. So many have despised and rejected Him; let us at least be faithful and devout followers.

It is a most disquieting thought, my dear brethren, that it is now the day of mercy; but how long that day may last, how shortly it may be ended, we know not. But all eternity depends on how we spend it. Our Blessed Lord is looking upon each one of us this

moment, and He knows exactly how near we are to the end. Perhaps we were included in the reprobate city when He wept over Jerusalem. We have had such chances, such favours, such graces, and where are the corresponding good deeds and virtues and holiness? Be not without fear for sin forgiven, and dread the day of reckoning, when the Master shall come to demand back the talents with which He has entrusted us. We dare not say, "Lord, we are ready now to face the judgment." We should like one more chance to repent of the past, to have our tears blessed and made meritorious by the tears of Christ once more before the end. We should like to balance our accounts once more. And, my dear brethren, we shall most likely have all these chances before the end comes. Now, indeed, is our day, our day of mercy; but the end will come swiftly and suddenly—the end will be hidden from our eyes. Let us so live now that there may be no vain regrets for all eternity. What a terrible awakening will befall those who will not think now, who go on neglecting God's grace! Suddenly the day of mercy will be ended, and for all eternity they will find the truth of those words of Christ, "For these are the days of vengeance." (Luke xxi. 22.)

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

PRIDE AND HUMILITY

"Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled."—LUKE xviii. 14.

1. Pride a vice and the mother of vices.
2. To God, most hateful and an outrage.
3. To ourselves, ruin; for—
   It makes us like to the devil;
   Deprives us of Divine help and mercy;
   Blinds us;
   Even of our prayers it makes a mockery and angers God.
4. How simple the lesson of humility! how efficacious its prayer!

WE have a perfectly drawn picture, my dear brethren, in this day's Gospel of pride and humility. It was drawn by the Master-hand—that hand that exalteth the humble and crushes the proud.

Pride, that inordinate opinion of our own excellence, is a vice, the very contrary to that spirit which Christ taught by His words and example. And pride is the more to be dreaded as it is the prolific mother of evil. "For pride is the beginning of all sin. He that holdeth it shall be filled with all maledictions, and it shall ruin him in the end." (Ecclus. x. 15.) From pride spring detraction, envy, talkativeness, contention, boasting, schisms, and heresies. "Never suffer pride to reign in

thy mind or in thy words, for from it all perdition took its beginning." (Tobias iv. 14.)

To God this vice is peculiarly hateful, for it is an outrage against Him. It is a theft and an injury to the Almighty, for to Him is due all honour, glory, and excellence. And pride usurps these for itself. A man in his pride desires to be honoured, held in esteem; himself to excel, God to be ignored. Moreover, God has decreed that His holy will should be obeyed and be the rule of life. Man in his pride resists the will of God, and chooses his own will as his master. We are not surprised, then, at the vehemence of the passages in Scripture denouncing pride. "Thy pride is brought down to hell, thy carcass is fallen down, . . . and worms shall be thy covering. . . . Thou saidst in thy heart: I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, . . . but yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, into the depth of the pit." (Isa. xiv. 11-15.) And again we read: "The Lord God hath sworn by His own soul, saith the Lord the God of Hosts: I detest the pride of Jacob, and I hate his houses." (Amos vi. 8.)

To ourselves, pride is simply ruin. We must hate it as an outrage against God, we must dread it because of the ruin it brings upon our souls. For first it makes man like to the devil. We know that it was his ruin, and he gloats over the satisfaction of ruining us with the same detestable vice.

It deprives us, too, of all Divine help, and, left to ourselves, pride rushes us into all manner of depravity. Pride pretends to respectability. Perhaps it may succeed outwardly, but commonly the vilest sins and the indulgence of the lowest passions follow—at least, secretly—in the wake of pride. It even banishes us

beyond God's mercy, for God resists the proud, and hearkens not to their prayer. "He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart." (Luke i. 51.) And pride blinds us. Take the instance in the Gospel to-day. How could any man imagine that boasting, rash judgment, contempt of his neighbour, was prayer pleasing unto God, except a man utterly blinded by pride, as was the Pharisee?

And, alas! even in his prayer, then, instead of propitiating God, pride makes a man provoke the anger of God. Bad as others may be, they have the time of prayer to invoke God and to seek mercy. The Pharisee only invoked God to be witness to his folly, and mercy he never for a moment thought that he required, and accordingly he never asked for it or obtained it. May God keep us from pride, a vice most hateful to God, and to ourselves utter ruin!

How much more blessed for ourselves to imitate the publican! How simply he teaches us the profound lesson of humility! Standing afar off, his eyes cast down, striking his breast, his words—all tell of his interior sorrow and shame for his sins. Every requisite disposition to find favour in the sight of God, to have his prayer heard, for mercy and forgiveness to be poured down upon his soul, is to be found in his short prayer: "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" The grief of true contrition, confession of his iniquity, and a cry for mercy are all in those few words. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." (Ps. xxxiii. 7.) "Is it My will that a sinner should die, saith the Lord God, and not that he should be converted from his ways, and live?" (Ezek. xviii. 23.) When the publican prayed he humbly came to God, addressed God, implored God, and owned to God his

sinfulness. Not in much speaking shall we be heard, but in the cry from the heart.

My dear brethren, this is not a picture of men, of types of men, common in those days only. The Lord, to Whom our hearts are laid bare, sees Pharisees and publicans enter the church day after day. We come to find forgiveness and grace; do we find mercy? or do we anger God and make a mockery of prayer? Is it not well to examine and make no mistake? We cannot afford to make any mistake about our soul. The devil will try his best to lure us into false security. There is no one that we are so fond of as ourselves; it is so easy to be deceived and to be self-satisfied. There has been too much of the Pharisee's self-complacency about us. Let us be afraid; let us throw ourselves at the feet of Christ now, and ask Him to teach us to be sorrowful and humble, that we may not waste the time of prayer, that we may not anger Him by our pride, when He is longing to be merciful. Grant us humility, O Lord, that our prayer may be acceptable in Thy sight. "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner!"

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

THE USE AND ABUSE OF GRACE

"By the grace of God, I am what I am."—1 Cor. xv. 10.

1. Grace given to all; some use, others abuse it.
2. This exemplified in the two Sauls—the King and the persecutor.
3. If we abuse God's grace, all the blame our own.
4. If we make good use of grace, God crowns His own work in us.

When we hear, my dear brethren, the great Apostle St. Paul speak so humbly of himself, "By the grace of God, I am what I am," we recognize and admire the power of grace. He would not have it that praise was due to him, that anything good or great might be attributed to him as of himself. He says, "I can do all things," but he adds, "in Him Who strengthened me." (Phil. iv. 13.) In another place: "Yet not I, but the grace of God with me." (1 Cor. xv. 10.)

Now it is certain that God gives us all grace sufficient to enable us to be saved, to become saints, and gives it to us over and over again. Some there are who abuse this grace, neglect it, despise it, whereas others correspond to it, are grateful for it, and treasure it. And the issue how different! To these "the grace of God is everlasting life." (Rom. vi. 23.)

This contrast is brought vividly before us by just

one word that St. Paul lets fall in this epistle. He refers to himself as having been Saul the persecutor. And the name recalls that other Saul, the King of Israel. What greater contrast could there be? Saul of the Old Testament, Saul of the New. And what makes all the difference? One could say, "His grace in me hath not been void"; and the other, alas! had been guilty of the abuse of grace. Both chosen, blessed, filled with grace—one acted up to it and was faithful, the other abused it.

Picture to your minds Saul of the Old Testament. "A choice and goodly man, and there was not amongst the children of Israel a goodlier person than he; from his shoulders upward he appeared above all the people." (1 Kings ix. 2.) And the Lord revealed to Samuel the Prophet: "Thou shalt anoint him to be ruler over My people Israel. He shall save My people out of the hand of the Philistines." (*Ibid.*, 16.) And Samuel said: "The Spirit of the Lord shall come upon thee, and thou shalt be changed into another man. Do whatsoever thy hand shall find, for the Lord is with thee." (*Ibid.*, x. 6, 7.)

How soon the picture darkens! Pride and a headstrong will lead him into disobedience. He rebelled, and refused to obey. How different, now, the Prophet's words: "Forasmuch as thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord also hath rejected thee from being King." (1 Kings xv. 23.) The Lord repented that He had made him King over Israel. Evil followed upon evil and sin upon sin—envy and hatred of David and seeking his life; consulting the witch of Endor; and suicide! "Then Saul took his sword and fell upon it." (*Ibid.*, xxxi. 4.) What a blighted life! He had graces bestowed upon him above all, but he had abused them.

And the second Saul began as a persecutor, a blasphemer of the Name of Jesus. And God's grace pierced that proud and wilful heart, converted it, extorted from it that cry that has become the prayer of so many repenting sinners: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts ix. 6.) And after he was baptized, "immediately he preached Jesus . . . that He is the Son of God." (*Ibid.*, v. 20.) We need not recount his labour and sufferings in defence of the Gospel, his unwearied preaching and writing and care of the Churches, his dauntless courage before Governors and Kings. "I have laboured more abundantly than all they," he owns himself, "yet not I, but the grace of God with me." (1 Cor. xv. 10.) Blessed Apostle, what an example art thou to us all of being faithful and corresponding to the grace of God, faithful to the very end! "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." (2 Tim. iv. 7.)

The world sees nothing of the work of grace, but before the eye of God a contrast, as marked as between the two Sauls, stands out between one man's soul and that of another. Every man receives his chances and opportunities. Every man, at some time, hears the warning voice of conscience, is struck by the example of some good neighbour, or awed by the fate of someone he knows. Every man has heard the call of God, but he can by degrees harden himself not to heed it, to trifle with danger, to risk his soul upon a chance. Alas! if he is lost, all the blame will be his own. He himself has brought about the ruin of his own soul. No excuse, no one else upon whom to cast the real blame. The great fact will stare him in the face for all eternity: "I have abused the grace of God!" He will recall his chances, so good, so numerous, and how he had cast

them from him. He will see how he began, by little and little, neglect of prayers, distractions, and being late at Mass, then, for very little reason, missing Mass; vanity and pride, resenting a word from priest or parent, but, on the other hand, so easily led by bad companions, growing fond of drink—alas! no dread of sin, no fear of God.

But you, who are as yet firm in faith, strenuous in practice, be humble, cling to the grace of God. It is not you, it is the grace of God that works within you. Let us all reverence that grace, and devoutly pray that we may use it and act up to it carefully, manfully, faithfully. We shall often fail, but we can always, with the help of God, begin again. Let us never relax our efforts.

And be consoled with this thought: God is so good that He crowns His own good work in us. If we ask Him, He will give us the good will. If we have a good will, then His grace is sufficient for us. So He actually confers on us the will and the accomplishment, and then rewards us for it. The best of us, then, may not boast or be content with our own sufficiency, but render praise and thanks to God, the Source of all grace. "By the grace of God, I am what I am."

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

ETERNAL LIFE

"Master, what must I do to possess eternal life?"—LUKE x. 25.

1. We can all answer rightly: does our conduct correspond?
2. Examine—Do we try to please God alone?
   Do we desire and seek God alone?
   Do we trust God entirely?
3. If we did, the peace of soul would be a foretaste of eternal life.
4. What did that lawyer do? Was he content with answering, or did he fulfil?

How many, my dear brethren, know their duty, but try to evade the fulfilment of it! Witness this lawyer in the Gospel read to-day: "He stood up, tempting" our Blessed Lord. "What must I do to possess eternal life?" Our Lord made him answer himself, and added: "Thou hast answered right; this do and thou shalt live." What shall we say, what excuse shall we be able to make at the great day of reckoning, if we have had the knowledge, but have not done our duty?

To possess eternal life we must try to please God alone, desire God alone, and trust in God alone—that is, loving Him with all our heart and soul and mind and strength.

The proof that we wish to please anyone is that we

take trouble to do it. Examine, and how little is the trouble you will find that you have spent in trying to please God. If there were as much trouble taken, day after day, in pleasing God as there is in pleasing our friends—those we desire to stand well with, those we love—or our own selves, my dear brethren, we should be Saints. Contrast, for instance, the length of time spent in pleasing God and in pleasing ourselves and others! And, after all, even trying our best, we cannot always succeed in pleasing others, and certainly not all others. There are always bitter dregs in the cup of pleasure to show us that we are meant for something better.

But we are always sure to please God if we try to do so. The good God blesses our least endeavour if we humbly try to please Him. And to please Him here is a pledge and token that we shall please Him and be acceptable to Him hereafter.

To possess eternal life we must desire God and seek God alone. And yet most men spend the greater part of their lives in desiring and seeking to gain not God, but other things. Oh, to compare God to the things that they so earnestly seek! There is the insult to the Lord our God! The folly of hankering after these things is quite apparent, for how few things are there that we gain with all our seeking and desiring? If we did gain them we should be disappointed; they would not satisfy us, for our hearts are made for something different. And if we did secure them and were delighted with them, for how long should we have them? Oh, how bitter is death to those who have much to part with, whose hearts are entwined around the vain and frivolous and limited things of this world!

Whereas to desire God is to find Him and possess Him: "Who crowneth thee with mercy and com-

passion, Who satisfieth thy desire with good things." (Ps. cii. 4, 5.) "They that seek the Lord shall not be deprived of any good." (Ps. xxxiii. 11.)

To possess eternal life we have to trust God alone and entirely. We part with everything and everyone else when we come to die. They are helpless, we are helpless; part we must! We are driven, then, of sheer necessity to seek refuge and trust in God, and may our Heavenly Father receive us! It is hard for Him to wait all our lives and be ignored, but let us turn to Him, abandon ourselves to His mercy and forgiveness, and He will receive us. "Preserve me, O Lord, for I have put my trust in Thee." (Ps. xv. 1.) Let us trust in Him; His blessed will must surely be fulfilled, and His will is kind and loving. Let us cast all our care upon Him, and He will have care of us. Trust in Him, and no evil can come near us: "None of them that trust in Him shall offend." (Ps. xxxiii. 23.)

If we lived up to what we know is right, and tried to please God, to desire God, and to trust in God, the world, with its worries and cares, would cease to trouble us, and the peace that would dwell in our hearts would be a foretaste of eternal life. Let us not be afraid; that peace cannot be disturbed by anything in this world. Neither poverty, sickness, desolation, persecution, nor torture can rob us of the peace which the loving God enkindles in our hearts. At the mention of these things, which this life dreads so much, memories of Saints rise up to show us that if we but seek eternal life nothing can separate us from God and the peace of God. St. Francis in his poverty, St. Ludmilla from her bed of suffering, St. Teresa and her eighteen years of spiritual desolation, and the army of martyrs with all the implements of torture, tell us that all these are

nothing to appal those who seek eternal life by pleasing, desiring, and trusting their good God. There can be happiness and peace with all these trials and afflictions, and in spite of them, and in consequence of them, if we only love God with all our mind and heart and strength!

My dear brethren, what did that lawyer do? He had answered right: our Lord had said, "Do this, and thou shalt live." Did he break with the enemies of Christ, and give himself to His service? Did he live up to his profession? We know not. And is it not the same with us? We have heard, and we know quite well, what we must do to possess eternal life, but how many of us will give up pleasing and desiring the things of this world, and trusting in them, and turn to God with all our heart? We know not.

My dear brethren, we know enough; we have had warnings enough that eternal life is the one thing that we must endeavour to attain. We know enough; are we doing what we should? "Thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt live." (Luke x. 28.)

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

THE OBLIGATION OF CONFESSION

"Go, show yourselves to the priests."—Luke xvii. 14.

1. This word, spoken to the lepers, is addressed to every sinner.
2. Examine each word—"Go, show yourselves to the priests."
3. The Church likewise insists on this being done: the law making Confession imperative.

The living voice of Christ, my dear brethren, spoken to the lepers, echoes throughout all time in the hearts of sinners: "Go, show yourselves to the priests." There are made many and various excuses to disregard it, but it takes long and miserable and anxious hours and days for a man to harden himself thoroughly against this word of the Master. It can be done, but not without misery and much sin; for there are men who seem to enjoy life, and eat and sleep as if they did not know what care was, and all the time they are disregarding and disobeying this injunction of the Lord. But many a lash does conscience give the wicked. And these same men dread the mention of repentance, are seized with a momentary panic when they hear of a sudden death, and resent their friends' dying, for they hate a funeral, which forcibly reminds them of their own end so soon to come, and after death

judgment. Yet many such can remain obdurate during life, and when death comes are unable to obey the word, for grace may be withdrawn, and they cannot break with sin.

The word of the Lord is short, but examination shows much is contained in it. The lepers were ready and prepared to obey whatever He should say; they hoped to be cured, and had prayed, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" So, when our Lord bade them "Go," forthwith they went, obedient and hoping. So this word "go" encourages poor sinners who are doubting whether they can repent and give up their sins, whether the good Lord will forgive them if they seek it. Go, leave your occupation, make time to go; and go, leave your sins and companions, and kneel with Magdalene at Christ's feet. You are afraid that He will repulse you! Go to Him, and He will not bid you go away. Look at His blessed words just before He worked this miracle, and you will go to Him with confidence. Talking to His disciples, He said: "If thy brother sin against thee, reprove him; and if he do penance, forgive him. And if he sin against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day be converted unto thee, saying, I repent, forgive him." (Luke xvii. 3, 4.) Could our Blessed Lord, my dear brethren, bid His disciples do this, and yet not do it Himself? If they were taught to forgive seven times a day, need we fear to go to our Blessed Saviour, heavy though the burden of our sins may be?

"Go, show yourselves to the priests." Ah, here is the hardship! Why did He not say, "Come to Me," and not "show yourselves to the priests"? My dear brethren, is not God the Master, and shall He not, then, appoint the means and the manner of His mercy being

bestowed ? When we are ill and afraid of dying, do we hesitate to tell the physician what ails us, to show him the loathsomeness of the disease, brought on, perhaps, by our sins and excesses ? Without he knows all he cannot form a correct judgment about the remedy. Then why begrudge to tell the priest, our spiritual physician, all the evil symptoms of the soul ? " Show yourselves." And yet how many allow a mere glimpse of their soul to be seen, and wonder why they are not cured ! Why afraid ? Why delay and put it off ? How many an invalid, past all recovery, has been told by his doctor : " If you had only come before, I could have cured you. In its early stages I could have mastered the disease." How many poor sinners, though for years that echo has been sounding in their soul, " Go, show yourself to the priest," have put it off ! Aye, and when old age and illness came, they put it off ; and when the priest stood at their bedside and urged them to repent, they put it off. At the next visit perhaps their speech had failed, or they were unconscious, or perhaps they had gone beyond recall. They had put it off !

My dear brethren, how grateful we should be to God that we have a means of being forgiven ! A means ? And is it not an easy means—short, secret, and secure ? We disclose our wretchedness, confess that it is our own doing, and our hearts are filled with sorrow. This is whispered to one bound under the strictest obligation never to divulge what he has heard in Confession. And how that secrecy is always maintained is openly acknowledged. And the security is this : that no malady baffles this physician's skill and power. He can forgive every sin which is truly confessed and repented of.

Our Holy Church has taken up this word of Christ and made it one of its Precepts. We are bound at least once a year to confess our sins—to go, show ourselves to the priest. And when we fall into mortal sin, the obligation weighs upon us again. But even without grievous sin—in fact, on purpose to keep free of grievous and all deliberate and wilful venial sin—good people go to Confession repeatedly and frequently. The obedience to the spirit of the Church, the humility it fosters in our hearts, bring a special blessing on such devout people.

We are all bound to go to Confession. One danger is that the utterly negligent are afraid to show their souls to the priest, though no one need have this fear, as we have seen. The other danger is quite different, and refers to those who frequently confess, and who find it difficult to accuse themselves of anything wrong. This is a matter of thankfulness to God. True; but to make sure of true sorrow for sin, do not forget to include all the sins of the past. No need to examine or rake up memories of past misdeeds, but to make sure of true sorrow include them. How few have not something that they can be really contrite about over and over again! Mention that; no details are required. Simply say, "I wish to confess all my sins against such a commandment, Sacrament, or virtue." You thus secure a good Confession—matter to be forgiven, and something definite about which there can be real contrition. "Wash me yet more from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." (Ps. l. 4.)

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

OUR LIFE'S SERVICE

"No man can serve two masters."—MATT. vi. 24.

1. Two mistakes: man attempts to be independent, or to serve two masters.
2. Impossible to compromise between the two.
3. Examine their service: of one it is either avaricious greed; pride and ambition; luxury. And what reward?
4. Of the other, the good God, His burden light, but the service must be whole-hearted, and the obedience filial and loving.

THERE are many, my dear brethren, who love to think that it is the very essence of manliness to be independent. They imagine that they are self-sufficient, that they can manage for themselves, carve out their own destinies. Oh that they would remember this: in whatsoever a man sins, of that is he the slave. Sinners they certainly are. If in no other way, they are guilty of most contemptible pride; then of that they are the slave. Slave—then what becomes of their boasted independence? If not guilty of this mistake, the majority of the rest of men try, in some way, to serve two masters. Is it not most foolish to try to accomplish the impossible? There can be no mistake, for in His infinite wisdom and truth our Lord has said plainly and most emphatically: "No man can serve

two masters. For either he will hate the one, and love the other; or he will sustain the one, and despise the other. No man can serve God and mammon."

There are the two masters between whom compromise is impossible. Neither will be content with less than all. We cannot be friends with both. We must choose, then, which we will serve. Are not our Lord's words plain enough, yet everybody is trying to evade them? Which of us dare assert: "I am and have been all for God, in thought, word, and deed; all for God, heart and soul, every aim and interest—all for Him." And which of us dare whisper even to our own guilty soul: "I am all for the devil, taking the bait of his allurements—mammon—in this life, and selling my soul to him for ever in the next"? This is carrying things too far, you will say. No, my brethren, unless one or the other is true of each of us, we have been trying to compromise; we have been trying to do the impossible.

Examine our Lord's words; He seems to say, Either you will hate the one, inasmuch as you see that he is the opponent of the other, whom you love—that is, you will hate the devil, the enemy of God, Whom you love and serve—or you will put up with the one, though you do not love him; you will bear the burden of his yoke, having become his slave; and the other, you will not hate, but you will neglect! Yes, sinners are the slaves of the devil, and they neglect the good God. St. Augustine says: "Even those who do not serve God do not hate Him, but they neglect Him, breaking His commandments, presumptuously trusting to His mercy and forgiveness." What a dangerous game, what a hazard! St. Paul bids us

remember: "Be not deceived, God is not mocked." (Gal. vi. 7.)

We must, then, make our choice of one master or the other. Examine their service that you may choose wisely, for you must cast in your lot with one or the other.

The service of one is utterly false and corrupt. You seem to be doing one thing; in reality it is very different. Some there are whose hearts are set upon the love of riches—gathering and hoarding up money. Who work harder, are more veritable slaves indeed, than the avaricious? And is not all this money-loving far worse than it seems? "Covetousness, which is the service of idols," says St. Paul. (Col. iii. 5.) Then money is their God! They worship it; they have sold their souls for money.

Others in this service are so deluded that they become slaves of pride and ambition. They actually think they have no master but themselves—the Evil One keeps himself in the background so cunningly—that they are self-sufficient, independent, whereas what are they, body or soul, laden with sins, exposed to the peril of eternal loss, the dupes of the devil?

And the unbridled liberty of lust and luxury that others indulge in, what is it but the servitude of corruption—slavery to the vilest sins, powerless against them, bound captive in bad habits? Of that by which you are overcome are you the slave? All these serve the devil, that inexorable taskmaster, who ensnares and entices souls to serve the mammon of iniquity. that he may ruin them eternally. His service degenerates into slavery, and will never end.

The other Master is the good God! We have been brought up in His service, we know what He bids us

do, we know His burden is light and His yoke is sweet, and it grieves us that we have ever been enticed away from His service. We have felt that it was mean and ungracious to desert the Lord our God even for a little while, even in little things. He is ready to welcome us to His service once again; but mind, Almighty God will not be partner with the devil! The idea of pleasing both masters must be put aside absolutely, and what we offer to God must be a whole-hearted service. We must seek the kingdom of God, and be enticed and allured by nothing else. The kingdom of God the reward for the service of a short life—can we not be content with that?

And can we call it service? For He wishes to be obeyed as a Father, and that filial love should be the source of all our obedience. What service is hard when love bids us do it? What is obedience to a loving child? Let us turn to our Heavenly Father, and choose Him for our Master.

Let us ask His help to give ourselves whole-heartedly to His service, not begrudging, not measuring how little we are bound to do, but gladly doing all that He would have us. Ah! there is no taskmaster here. If we are weak, He will strengthen us; weary, will refresh us; downhearted at our failings and shortcomings, He will encourage us: for He is not only our Master, but our Father, and we are His children.

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

EVIL INFLUENCES

"Behold a dead man was carried out."—Luke vii. 12.

1. Description of the miracle.
2. Same mercy shown to us; can we expect it again and again?
3. The influences that keep us in sin:
   Attachment to sin;
   Cowardice;
   Foolish hope of a long life;
   Presumption.
4. "He gave him to his mother"—the Church.

The prophet of old said: "These things I shall think over in my heart, therefore will I hope. The mercies of the Lord that we are not consumed: because His commiserations have not failed." (Lam. iii. 21, 22.) This thought comes back to our mind when we read the Gospel to-day. The young man was dead; they were carrying him to the grave, his poor widowed mother following him in her grief and desolation, and a great multitude of the city accompanying her. And the mercy of God met and stopped that mournful procession, raised the youth to life, and gave him to his mother.

God in His goodness, not once, but many a time, has worked this miracle upon our souls! Let us recall to

mind days gone by when our souls, alas! were borne along by evil influences, dead to God's grace, the Church, our Mother, and the angels mourning the lost one. And God's mercy has stopped that procession of death, forgiveness has raised our soul to life, and we have been restored to the Church.

The danger is that we are not sure that this may happen again. Sure of it? No, we have no right to expect it or to claim it. For when we sin mortally, in that same moment we deserve to be abandoned by God, to be handed over to the devil, and be eternally lost. It is therefore the ineffable mercy of God that the sinner, who has offended Him so grievously, is not only not condemned, but even meets with mercy and forgiveness.

Let us see, then, what are the evil influences that prevent a sinner repenting at once, and that carry us on in our sins without reflection, without fear of our destruction. What more helpless than the dead carried to the grave! And such are we, when in sin, borne on by these bearers, these evil influences.

And what are they? First, the love of sin. The attachment to vanity and pleasure, the feeling that we could not live without them. How many have turned away from repentance because they could not give up that wicked and impure love; because they could not attempt to master that craving for drink; because they could not bring themselves to restore that ill-gotten gain which their avarice clings to; because they could not forgive their neighbours!

And another bearer to destruction is the fear of spiritual labour—the work of penance and piety. We think God's service is hard; it is repugnant to us to fight against temptation and to do penance. We

look at the labour and are appalled; we have not the courage nor the strength. Oh, we have forgotten to raise our eyes and look at Him, who bids us "Come to Me, all ye that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you." (Matt. xi. 28.)

The third bearer is the false hope of a longer life. We comfort ourselves with vain and empty words. Oh, there is time yet for repentance; we need not abandon our pleasant, easy, sinful ways as yet. And this in spite of what our Blessed Lord has said: "Watch, for ye know not the day nor the hour." (Matt. xxv. 13.) And if we are assured of a long life, of many years to come, when should we be stronger to break with sin and begin a new life? For the longer we remain in sin, the heavier our burden and the weaker we become; the more under the power of the devil, the more estranged from our insulted Saviour.

And the last bearer is presumption of God's mercy. Our Heavenly Father delays His Divine justice, and we take advantage of that, and presumptuously reckon on His forgiveness as assured. "Add not sin upon sin; and say not the mercy of God is great, and He will have mercy on the multitude of our sins. For mercy and wrath quickly come from Him, and His wrath looketh upon sinners. Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day. For His wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance He will destroy thee." (Ecclus. v. 5, 9.)

Whilst, then, the mercy of God is still with us, let us earnestly beg of Him grace to fear these evil influences which seek to carry our souls to perdition. Beware of them—attachment to sin, the fear of making an endeavour, the foolish hope of a long life, the presuming on God's goodness. Let us drive them from

our hearts, and implore our Blessed Lord to restore us to the life of grace and to the care of the Church. "And He gave him to his mother." (Luke vii. 15.) There is our safeguard and our hope—to be taught by the Church, advised by the Church, guided by the Church, strengthened by the Church. Strengthened! Yes, strengthened by prayer, by the Holy Mass, by the Sacrament of Penance, by frequent Communion. Greater strength than this God Himself cannot give us. "If any man eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever." (John vi. 52.)

And with the Church there is "the great multitude of the city"—the angels and Saints of God, and the prayers of good friends, whose wish and endeavour is to counteract the evil influences bearing us to destruction. Within the Church we are in communion with these, are strengthened and encouraged by them to be manful and earnest as they were; we are helped by their prayers, filled with hope by their example. Alas! on the other hand, if we wander away from the Church, we shall fall under the evil influences of sin once again, and, borne along to death, we shall trust to a mere chance whether the mercy of God will meet us once again, raise us to life, and restore us to our Mother.

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

A LESSON FROM THE ENEMIES OF CHRIST

"They watched Him."—LUKE xiv. 1.

1. Gospel narrative: "they watched Him."
2. As Christ, so the Church and its members watched. Our responsibility—we give good example or scandal.
3. His enemies could watch Him; should not His friends likewise, but for so different a reason? "Watch and pray."
4. We can neglect God, but He is ever watching us. We, too, shall watch Him some day.
5. The reward of watching and carefulness.

TO-DAY, my dear brethren, let us learn a lesson, not from the words or miracles of our Blessed Lord, but from His enemies. Let us notice the Gospel; there is much more in it than a mere cursory reading of it would lead us to imagine. It was a Sabbath day; it was the house of a Pharisee that our Lord entered, and a man afflicted with the dropsy was there, by design, and they watched Him. Seven different miraculous cures were worked by our Blessed Saviour on the Sabbath day, and scandal was taken each time by the Pharisees. Here they pretended to be friendly, invited Him to eat bread, laid the trap of the palsied man before His Divine mercy, and watched Him.

Ah! they might watch our Blessed Lord, and take scandal, but no scandal did He ever give. They were

covered with confusion time after time when trying to ensnare Him. But, like its Divine Master, so is the Church watched, and its members, our own unworthy selves. We bear the name of Christ; our lives are either an honour or a disgrace to our Master. It is a weighty and responsible thing to be a Catholic. The world is ever watching us, for it knows our profession, our obligations full well. The Sunday's Mass—and the unbeliever's eye is watching to see if we attend, if we act up to our belief or not. The abstinence on Friday, the days of Lent—and amidst sneers at such observances, they are watching to see if we are faithful and obedient to fast or abstain. And how they despise the cowards who fail to observe them! And Confession, too, they watch; and if we never or seldom go, how can they give us credit for the faith we have in the forgiveness of sins? And if Catholics are noted for drinking, gambling, running into debt, being quarrelsome and unneighbourly, how the world watches, and the devil watches, too, gloating over such scenes, and all the dishonour falls upon Him Who died to take away our sins! The Church groans under the misdeeds of her children. Our lives, our actions, give either good example or scandal; but woe to him by whom scandal cometh!

Should we not think shame to ourselves that we are so remiss in watching over ourselves to live strictly, carefully, fervently? And our enemies so keen to watch our misconduct and our falls, which scandalize Christ and His Church. Oh! should not we, His friends, watch and pray to Him—watch to please Him; watch to know what He would have us do; watch to learn to be like Him and imitate Him?

Yes, His enemies could watch; time, trouble, scheming, and planning were nothing to them. Envy

and spite gave them activity and perseverance in their wiles and deceitfulness against our Lord. Repeatedly in the Gospel we notice this, but most especially as His Passion and Death drew near. Then most painfully do we see the contrast between His enemies and His friends. The night before He died, see how busy, energetic, watchful were His enemies! They had all arrangements made; their bodies knew no fatigue, their eyes no sleep that night in their anxiety to apprehend our Lord. And the disciples, what of them? They had listened to His tender words of parting; they had received their first Communion; they went with their Master for the last time to the Garden where He had spent many a night in prayer. "And He taketh Peter and James and John with Him, and He began to fear and to be heavy. And He saith to them, My soul is sorrowful even unto death; stay you here and watch." (Mark xiv. 33, 34.) Judas had hastened away from the supper-table; the band of soldiers were ready, and he was leading them across the valley to the place he knew so well to betray his Blessed Master. Yes, Judas was all alert and watchful. And there in the garden our Lord "cometh to them and findeth them sleeping. And He saith to Peter: Simon, sleepest thou? Couldst thou not watch one hour? Watch ye, and pray that you enter not into temptation." (Mark xiv. 37, 38.) St. Peter never forgot this night. He had not watched, not prayed, and he fell. How he remembered it! Thirty-five years afterwards he writes: I, who am "a witness of the sufferings of Christ," beseech you to "be sober and watch." (1 Pet. v. 1, 8.) Let us take this word from him in all humility, treasure it, and make this watchfulness the foundation of our fervour and fidelity.

My dear brethren, we have free will, and if we choose we can practically forget and neglect God. But remember, God is ever watching us ; and some day—oh, it is surely, swiftly coming !—we shall all watch Him. And the keenness of our anxiety and fear, watching Him then, will be in proportion to our negligence and sinfulness now. Scoffers and unbelievers, brave men at drinking and wickedness, vain disregarders of the Church and its holy laws, will then, at judgment, in fear and agony, watch the face of Jesus Christ. All too late to look up and implore for mercy, hope all gone, their ruin all their own fault, they will stand there trembling, waiting, watching for those lips, full of wrath, to pronounce their sentence.

How different will that watching be for the humble, faithful, obedient ones ? They have watched Him in life, day after day, to learn His blessed will and do it. Conscious, indeed, of many, many a fall and negligence, yet they have always looked up and begged for mercy. Their prayer will be : " Lord, by all the times that I have watched for Thee at Holy Mass, looking up to Thee reverently at the Elevation and adoring Thee, ' My Lord and my God,' give me hope and confidence to watch for and behold Thy smile of welcome, bidding me to Thy kingdom, and may I watch before Thy throne for ever and for ever !" Yes, for ever now they will watch before His throne, gazing, drinking in that blessed Vision, their joy, their glory, and their reward.

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

COMMUNION THE TEST OF LOVE

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God."—MATT. xxii. 37.

1. What is love? To prefer God to all things; to detest all that opposes Him; to do His blessed will always and in all things.
2. Ourselves measured by this standard.
3. Holy Communion practically fulfils what it is to love.
4. Then how can we refuse the invitation to frequent Communion?

IT is not sufficient, my dear brethren, simply to talk of love, to imagine we love, but we must master its real meaning, and live a life of loving. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," is the first and great commandment, and it will not do to make any mistake about its meaning, and the intensity with which we have to practise it.

What is it, then, to love Almighty God? First, to prefer God before all other things. In spite of all allurements and enticements of the world, the proffered love and friendship of those around us, our heart must stand fixed and firm, preferring God to all. Not only preferring God in His glory, His rewards, His graces, but preferring God when He bids us persevere in the narrow path, when He bids us take up our cross, when He bids us blindly to obey.

Secondly, to detest, to banish from us, all that opposes God. Not to try any compromise, to be satisfied with no half-measures; but, looking up to God as our end, to despise and break with all that is contrary to His aims and interests. "Know you not that the friendship of this world is the enemy of God?" (Jas. iv. 4.)

Lastly, to love God is to do His will always and in all things. That humble dependence on God, seeking His will, accepting His will, perseveringly fulfilling His will, whatever it may cost us in giving up and overcoming our own inclinations, is a supreme act of homage to God that proves we love Him with our whole heart, with our whole soul, and with our whole mind. "You are My friends," said our Lord and Saviour, "if you do the things that I command you." (John xv. 14.) Not once or twice in our life, in great emergencies only, have we to do God's will, but always and in all things. It is not doing great things for God that redounds to His honour and glory, but in doing those things that He would have us do, in doing His will day after day for His blessed sake.

What would be the judgment on us if this moment we were measured by this standard of the love of God? How many things are there that, when we come to part with them, we feel their loss more than the loss of God's grace? Have we preferred them to God? If not actually, we must own that it was perilously near to it. And if we detest these things that oppose God, how is it that we have passed so much time in their company, and found it all so pleasant? But it is by examining whether and how we do God's will that we find how far we are from loving God with our whole heart. Dare we say that we are doing God's

will? How seldom indeed! For the most part it is our own will, and what scheming to have our own way! how we hope and long that it may happen as we wish it, and how attached to our own will we find we have been when things go contrary, and we are struck sad and murmur! Murmur against God, and we were pretending that it was God's will that we were trying to fulfil!

We must practise fulfilling this commandment, and what is there that so perfectly realizes the fulfilment of this commandment as Holy Communion? In a worthy reception of the Blessed Eucharist we have formed acts, and intense acts, of preference towards God, giving Him our heart and soul for Him to be Master there; of detestation of sin, which is an act of opposition and rebellion to God, and an act which separates us from Him, and of its own malice would separate us for ever; and of union with His Blessed Will, typified, perfected, and intensified by the union of the Bread of Life within us. If you can think of anything that will better train you to love God, practise that. Our Blessed Lord could not—could not think of or create a better means. Even His omnipotence had come to a limit, because it had come to Himself! Further He could not go.

Yet does the urging frequent Communion meet with that response it should? Thank God, with some it does; but with how many the plea falls upon unheeding ears. They leave it to others, as if it mattered nothing to them that their own souls are being starved, and their power of glorifying God diminished by every Communion that they voluntarily omit. Others actually begrudge an extra Communion. Then how

can such people dare to think or say: "I love the Lord my God with all my heart"?

Ours has to be a life of loving, loving God always and in all things. "The end of the commandment is charity from a pure heart, and a good conscience and an unfeigned faith." (1 Tim. i. 5.) Each time we receive the Blessed Sacrament worthily do we not fulfil these words to the letter? And what could teach us better than these words of St. Paul how to prepare for Communion? For we come "with unfeigned faith" to worship and adore that Bread of Life, the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ our Lord. And we come with "a good conscience," for we have repented of our sins, and by the power of the Sacrament of Penance our sins have been absolved. With "a pure heart," too, we approach to receive our Lord. We have driven from our heart all that has hitherto usurped God's place, sin and attachment to sin; it is all for God now, and we bid Him welcome, and pray Him never to leave us more.

The practice of frequent Communion would make our life a life of loving, and we should in very truth keep the first and great Commandment "with a pure heart, a good conscience, and an unfeigned faith."

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

"Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee."—MATT. ix. 2.

1. Christ's claim to the power of forgiving sins proved by this miracle.
2. Our hope depends on the Church having this same power.
3. Our misery if there were no forgiveness.
4. The dispositions to ensure forgiveness learned from the Gospel—viz., prayer and desire, faith, effort.

THE fact, my dear brethren, that in three different Gospels we have a full account of this miracle shows its importance. But, further, three times over are recorded these words of our Blessed Lord: "But that you may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins." (Matt. ix. 6; Mark ii. 10; Luke v. 24.) Thus Christ emphatically claimed the power of forgiving sins, and proved it by this miracle. "Whether is it easier to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee; or to say, Arise and walk? . . . Then said He to the man sick of the palsy, Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house. And he arose and went into his house."

We bless God for this power exercised by our Saviour, and we have too much faith and confidence in God to doubt but that this same power was trans-

mitted by Christ to His Church on earth. And yet what is the cause of more blasphemy and evil-thinking in men's hearts than this very claim of the Church to have the power to forgive sins? The Scribes said of our Saviour, the world of the Church: "Why doth this man speak thus? He blasphemeth. Who can forgive sins but God only?" (Mark ii. 7.) We have the faith and believe that Christ is God; that the power He claimed and exercised of forgiving sins He did not reserve to Himself, but granted to His disciples in those plain, unmistakable, and sacred words: "Amen I say to you, Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven." (Matt. xviii. 18.) And this power He confirmed and ratified when risen from the dead. He had died for sin, He had conquered sin. "He breathed on them and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." (John xx. 22, 23.) The Church esteems this power amongst its greatest privileges and treasures, and has incessantly used this power from the very beginning. It was never lost sight of, never forgotten, for by all it was treasured as the source of their hope.

We know that we have sinned; to gain heaven, we know that we must be forgiven. If it were not the sure Catholic belief that this forgiveness could be obtained, what misery would be ours! For what is due to us for our sins? Not only eternal death, but temporal death as well. We deserve to be cut off in our sins. "A sinner," says St. Augustine, "is unworthy of the bread he eats, of the earth he dwells on, of the air he breathes. He deserves that every

creature should rise and turn against him. Certain it is, the devil, to make sure of his eternal loss, longs for his death, and would encompass it, only for God's mercy." "The mercies of the Lord that we are not consumed; because His commiserations have not failed." (Lam. iii. 22.)

Thank God for the faith and the hope that we have that there is forgiveness for those who repent. "Thou hast mercy upon all . . . and overlookest the sins of men for the sake of repentance. . . . Thou sparest all; because they are thine, O Lord, Who lovest souls." (Wisd. xi. 24, 27.)

If we have this faith and hope, how is it there is not more eagerness in seeking forgiveness? How can we explain our procrastination and unwillingness to repent? Our one anxiety should be to live in those dispositions which ensure forgiveness. We can easily learn them from the sick man in the Gospel. Recall the incident for one moment. Our Lord was in a house crowded to the door, and they came to Him bringing one sick of the palsy, carried by four. And when they could not offer him unto Him on account of the multitude, they uncovered the roof where He was, and opening it, they let down the bed wherein the man sick of the palsy lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, He said: "Be of good heart, son: thy sins are forgiven thee."

What a desire that man had to regain his health, and how he must have entreated his friends to carry him to Jesus! We, too, must long and desire to be forgiven, and entreat, pray to our friends, the angels, the Saints, and Blessed Mary, the refuge of sinners, to carry us to Jesus. Prayer and desire to be forgiven are the first necessary dispositions.

Faith and confidence are dispositions that likewise we must have. When our Blessed Lord saw the man's faith and confidence, He said: "Be of good heart, son." It touched our Lord, and such faith could not go unrequited. Might they not well have withdrawn until a more opportune time? There was not room even at the door; they mounted to the roof, carried up the sick man, "and let him down through the tiles with his bed into the midst before Jesus." (Luke v. 19.)

This was true faith and confidence, for it burst forth into effort—the effort and endeavour they made to get to Jesus. We can always suspect our faith if it remains quiescent, if it does not spring into life, and show itself by activity and effort. We have to give up our sins and break with them, snap the attachment to them, and thus prove our willingness to amend if we hope to be forgiven.

These, then, are the dispositions ensuring forgiveness—prayer and desire, faith and confidence, and an effort to break with our sins, and to come to our Blessed Saviour. Look up to Him, and let your poor sick souls long to be cured. You are helpless; He will give you the dispositions, the prayer and the desire, and these He will crown with faith and confidence and strength to make an effort. "Thou sparest all: because they are thine, O Lord, Who lovest souls." (Wisd. xi. 27.)

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

THE STATE OF GRACE

"Friend, how camest thou in hither not having on a wedding garment? But he was silent."—MATT. xxii. 12.

1. Meaning of the wedding garment; and the man's own fault in not having one.
2. The state of grace: what is it? Our own fault if not in it.
3. Why men remain not in the state of grace:
   They are unwilling to submit and obey;
   They are negligent;
   Their pride and self-sufficiency prevent them.
4. Yet this state of grace requisite: otherwise cast out.
5. "But he was silent." Where all his excuses?

MANY of you, my dear brethren, may wonder at the treatment of this man in the Gospel. At first sight it seems a very harsh and summary proceeding. Those who had been invited to the marriage would not come. And the king was angry; and as the marriage-feast had been prepared, he commanded his servants to go out into the highways, and as many as they should find to call to the marriage. And the servants gathered together all that they found, both bad and good, and the marriage was filled with guests. And the king went in to see his guests, and he saw there a man not having on a wedding garment.

Now, was there anything for the king to be sur-

prised at ? The poor man had been met with on the road, compelled to come in, and, because he had not on a wedding garment, punished. "And he said to him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having on a wedding garment ? But he was silent. Then the King said to the waiters, Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into exterior darkness : there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

My dear brethren, was not this a cruel and unjust proceeding ? No, and those who heard our Lord speak this parable knew well the custom of marriages in that country. Just as at the marriage feast of Cana we are told of the waterpots of stone, "according to the manner of the purifying of the Jews" (John ii. 6), which were filled with water, that water which Christ turned into wine ; so, besides the water to purify, garments, cloaks, or mantles were provided for the guests to throw over their walking clothes as they entered. And this man, through bad manners or neglect, had ignored the festive garment which was proffered him, and so wantonly had insulted the king, as if one of us had walked up the church and sat down without removing our hat, conscious of the irreverence of it.

And why should our Blessed Lord have mentioned such an incident ? From the meaning it has and its frequent occurrence. That wedding garment signifies the state of grace which is requisite for one approaching the Holy Eucharist, and the man represents those who dare approach without being clothed in the state of grace.

What is precisely meant by the state of grace ? To be free from mortal sin ; to be in a state of friendship with God. The Sacrament of Baptism endows each

one with this state of grace, and when by mortal sin we have lost and forfeited this state, we can regain it and recover it by the Sacrament of Penance. We can lose the garment of grace; through the mercy of God we can regain it. So it is our own fault, and an insult most heinous before God, for us to receive the Blessed Sacrament without being clothed in the state of grace.

Then how is it that men can be found who are not in the state of grace? How can their conduct be explained? for it seems inconceivable. Yet there are numbers of men and women who understand what the state of grace is, and yet choose to be out of it, and remain out of it. And why?

They are unwilling to give in to, submit to, or to obey Almighty God. This perversity and stubbornness held sway long ago in the heart of man. Did not the prophet Samuel rebuke Saul: "Obedience is better than sacrifices: and to hearken rather than to offer the fat of rams. Because it is like the sin of witchcraft, to rebel; and like the crime of idolatry, to refuse to obey"? (1 Kings xv. 22, 23.)

Again they neglect. They know they should, they half mean to put themselves right with God some day, but they neglect and delay. Is negligence conceivable in such a case, when remaining in that state is provoking God to cast us off? Let us pray rather for holy fear that we may walk before God, caring for our souls with reverence and diligence.

And the last cause keeping men out of grace is their pride and self-sufficiency. Yes, pride prevents them. They are so blinded that they see not what they need, and the sad and loathsome state their soul is in. And to obtain God's grace they have to humble themselves, and own they need it and have it not, and beg and pray

for it. And pride and self-sufficiency cannot bring themselves to this.

This state of grace, my dear brethren, is, nevertheless, most requisite and necessary. Otherwise there can only be one ending to it all: we are sure to be brought before the King, and His eye will take in all. There is no chance of escaping detection. And we could easily have had it all so different if we had chosen. There will be the everlasting bitterness of regret. What good will it have done us living on in sin? The amazing folly and stupidity to risk so much for so little! We were going to change. It is too late! the King's eye is upon us. And, horror! He points to us, and we hear: "Bind his hands and feet and cast him out."

"But he was silent." One would have thought that a man that had brazened out such a situation would have found something to say for himself. No; and it will still be the same of ourselves. Our poor dry tongue will not be able to articulate one word of an excuse. We had such plausible reasons and excuses; where have they vanished? We could remain obstinate, unwilling to submit and obey, neglecting and delaying, quite content with our own selves, and now what avail our pride and arrogance?

Keep the wedding garment spotless and pure, and always ready. We need it at Holy Communion most especially; but we need it always, for we know not when the King may come, when the summons of death may sound. We shall need it then.

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

WHENCE OUR COURAGE AND STRENGTH?

"That you may be able to resist in the evil day."—Eph. vi. 13.

1. We need courage and strength in the battle of life.
2. Three things that cause us to fear:
   Our own selves; our enemy; the issue of the conflict.
3. On the other hand, the sources of courage.
   Remembrance of God's goodness; of the love of Christ for us; of the promises of God; of the wisdom and power of God.
4. To gain help and strength we must distrust ourselves, and look up to and invoke God.

Our life is a warfare, my dear brethren, and yet in spite of constant defeats and wounds we must not lose heart, and think our life nothing better than a forlorn hope. If we trust to ourselves we may well lose heart. But no one need be discouraged if he looks up to that King Who bids us go forth, for He provides us with the arms and strength wherewith to conquer. "Fear not, and be not dismayed; because the Lord Thy God is with thee in all things, whatsoever thou shalt go to." (Jos. i. 9.) And we need this courage and strength indeed, for we have to strive against the devil, overcome ourselves, and the issue of the conflict is eternal.

Yes, these are the three things that cause us to fear.

Our own selves—we cannot be sure of our own selves; we will and we will not; we begin and we give up. So weak, so full of faults, so easily discouraged, we must not, cannot trust our own selves. And yet we have to overcome our vices, govern our passions, and resist our desires and inclinations.

This would be work enough, but this poor self of ours is tempted, misled, duped, tyrannized over by an enemy whom we cannot see, but who is ever watching us. This enemy is ever planning "the evil day," lurking in ambush, ever ready for the attack, when he hopes we shall not be able to resist.

And in this conflict there is no truce, no compromise, no hopes of terms of peace. No, it is a struggle unto death; and what a death—the loss of God, our all in all, abandonment by Him, and everlasting slavery under the tyranny of the devil.

But all this must not dismay us, but urge us the more earnestly to seek the sources of our courage and strength. God has not cast us into the conflict for our ruin, but that we may emerge victorious. Remembrance of God's mercy and goodness is our first incitement to take courage that "we may be able to resist in the evil day." "The Lord is good to them that hope in Him, to the soul that seeketh Him." (Lam. iii. 25.) "Know ye that no one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded. For who hath continued in His commandment, and hath been forsaken? or who hath called upon Him, and He hath despised him? He is a protector to all that seek Him." (Ecclus. ii. 11-13.)

God became man for our redemption, and remembrance of Christ's love for us, that He became our brother, fills our heart with comfort and courage.

"God so loved the world, as to give His Only-Begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting." (John iii. 16.) "If God be for us, who is against us? He that spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how hath He not also, with Him, given us all things?" (Rom. viii. 31, 32.)

And this is not our own reasoning and deductions from God's goodness and love, but have we not in the Scriptures the word of God promising help, the promises of God, the pledge of God, oftentimes repeated? "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." (Ps. xlix. 15.) And again: "In an acceptable time I have heard thee, and in the day of salvation I have helped thee; and I have preserved thee. . . . And all flesh shall know, that I am the Lord that save thee, and thy Redeemer." (Isa. xlix. 8, 26.)

If our enemy is cleverer than we are, and has his schemes that we see not and cannot grapple with, how consoling it is for us to know that we are not all alone in the conflict, but that the wisdom and power of God is with us! God knows and sees all things—our weakness and ignorance, the plots of the devil, all the eventualities of life—and He has the power to arrange that with "the evil day" grace shall more abound, and to make from the temptation an issue of victory for us.

No one need fear but that there will be abundance of help and strength from God to enable us to resist if we only ask it from Him. But there is always one danger—we may trust to ourselves. It is he who trusts in himself, and not in God, who falls. We must, then, be humble and distrustful of our own powers and

goodness. God watches over the humble, and before the prayer has left our lips He is with us and assists us. And the holy fear of God will be our safeguard. With these two dispositions in our hearts, humility and the holy fear of God, it is impossible not to pray, and not to pray fervently and constantly, and impossible likewise for those prayers not to be heard. "I sought the Lord, and He heard me; and He delivered me from all my troubles. The angel of the Lord shall encamp round about them that fear Him; and shall deliver them. . . . The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart; and He will save the humble of spirit." (Ps. xxxiii. 5, 8, 19.)

These, then, are the sources of our courage and strength to resist in the evil day: in humility and fear to invoke the help of the Lord—that Lord Who is mercy and goodness itself, Who became our brother to prove His love, Who has promised and pledged Himself to hear us and defend us, Who is all-wise and all-powerful. "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the protector of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps. xxvi. 1, 2.)

Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost

FREE WILL

" And he would not."—MATT. xviii. 30.

1. Though so frail, we have one strong, independent power, free will. The power of meriting or of sinning.
2. Exemplify our sins. See in each " He would not."
3. There is something each of us is unwilling either to do or to give up. That " he would not " may be our ruin.
4. Let us offer the sacrifice of our will to God.

WE are creatures of God. Everything we have is from Him. On Him are we dependent for every breath we draw. And yet in the midst of all this frailty and utter dependency God has planted in us a free and independent power—our will. God gives us this power, and then even the Almighty cannot force it. It is free to choose or reject ; it is free to turn to God and serve Him, or become a rebel. Our free will has the power of meriting or of sinning. God's grace is never wanting to us, but it is powerless to save us unless we will.

And sinful man can allow this will to become blinded and headstrong and perverse. It is often, then, our own greatest enemy. Mark in the Gospel how this servant, whom his master had forgiven, was callous to the pleading of his fellow-servant, was blind to his own interest, risked his master's certain anger, and yet

"he would not." His will had got the mastery over his heart, his intellect, and his memory, for how soon he had forgotten his own misery, his prayer for mercy, and his master's kindness! So his will had its way, and brought him to ruin.

It is our own fault if we allow our will to be a tyrant over us, therefore sin is essentially our own. Whether it is by thought, word, or deed that we commit a wilful, deliberate sin, there is no excuse or palliation; our will consented, wished it, would have it, and the sin is our own. At our judgment both our Angel Guardian and Satan the accuser will agree in one thing—in ascribing the guilt of every sin to our own free will. We would, or we would not.

Exemplify our own sins—uncharitableness, avarice, drink, bad thoughts, and the sins against God. The essence of all their sinfulness is in our will—we would not. For instance, our brother has offended us, we are bitter against him. Time after time, when we waken in the night, when we try to say our prayers, when we enter into the Sacred Presence of Jesus on the Altar, the words of our Blessed Lord constantly recur: "But I say to you, Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you." (Matt. v. 44.) And how many times we would not!

And the greed of money, the envy of others when they grow rich, the anxiety about it chokes all other thoughts and aspirations in our soul. We hear the voice: "Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee." (Luke xii. 20.) But our will clings to the love of money! Give it up? We would not.

And one sin, drink, instead of hardening our will, makes it such a weak, irresolute, senseless thing that

it cannot resolve, cannot even try to give up the evil. And yet "he would not" is at the root of this evil too; he would not as long as he could, and now he is its slave, and he could not.

And what company the will chooses for its intimates! Bad thoughts and evil desires run riot in many a soul. At first they are loathed, and the soul shudders to have them for a friend. And after a time the will, that should aspire to heaven, has given itself up to them, and though conscience has often bidden it to cast them out, it would not.

And as regards the sins against God, how hard it is that the Almighty should be offended by that very power, our free will, that He implanted in our soul that we might merit heaven. Instead of our will adhering to God in faith, it makes idols of other things, and sets them up for gods. Instead of our will rejoicing in the blessed hope of God's goodness and the promises to come, it banishes the thought of heaven, and centres all its hopes in the pleasures and follies and vanities of this life. And our will can rob God of that which He justly claims, to be loved above all things, and adds to the injustice by the insult of preferring such common, vile, and sinful things to God—the holy, the loving God.

This is whither our wills are tending, but, please God, they have not been so utterly turned against Him as yet. But still there is something that each one of us is unwilling to do or to give up for the love of God. We all have some weakness, and the Evil One is planning and plotting about it. That unwillingness—that "he would not"—will work our ruin if we let it have its way. My dear brethren, we can each put our finger on the very spot at once. Let us not be cowards

and shirk it, and put it off to another time. Let us own it now, humbly and sorrowfully before God. Many a time His grace has pleaded with us to give it up, to break with it, to make an effort worthy of God's acceptance, and we would not. Whatever it is, is it worth while to cling to it and forfeit heaven? To cling to spite and hatred because we were slighted; to cling to miserable money, perhaps unjustly gained and wickedly used; to cling to an evil companion, how we shall hate each other for all eternity if we both are lost! to cling to anything that the remorseless hand of death may so soon snatch from us; to cling to any neglect of God in prayers, at Mass, at Holy Communion, when so soon we shall have to own Him Lord and Master. Yes, our will has it in its power that we shall own Him Lord and Master joyfully with the Saints in heaven, or in anguish and remorse in the unquenchable torments of the lost.

Let us turn to God now and offer Him the free will that He has given us. Let us offer it as a sacrifice to Him. It is all we have. Let us unite it to His Blessed Will, and pray for the grace that all the endeavour and joy of our will may be in seeking the good pleasure and glory of God.

Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost

CHRIST OUR FRIEND

"He that is a friend loveth at all times."—PROV. xvii. 17.

1. Christ claims to be our friend.
2. What manner of friend is this?
   All-wise; all-powerful; all-loving.
3. Why does He wish to be our friend?
4. How have we treated Him?
5. How should we treat Him?
   Trust Him; long after Him; adhere to Him.

THE richest man who walks the earth, my dear brethren, is poor indeed if he has no friend. And a true friend is most rare, for such friendship is most excellent and above all praise. How often in choosing a friend we are deceived! It was their own interest, gain, happiness they were seeking, not ours; it was selfishness, not friendship. Many of us, too, have not the way of winning friends. In our loneliness we look round and wonder what will become of us in old age, poverty, sickness; who will care when we die, who will shed a tear at our funeral.

But there is a message for each one of us that should dispel such gloomy thoughts—a message from Jesus Christ our Lord. He says: "But I have called you friends . . . you have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you." (John xv. 15, 16.) So, whether we wish it or not, there is one claims to be a friend.

Friend? The Son of God, the Creator of the universe, the light and the joy of heaven, can it be that He wishes us to know Him and count upon Him as a friend? Yes, my dear brethren, that is His claim. Our unworthiness is no obstacle. "Behold a man . . . a friend of publicans and sinners." (Matt. xi. 19.) That is a title that Jesus Christ loved.

Think what manner of friend is He? The Wise Man tells us "A faithful friend is a strong defence" (Ecclus. vi. 14); and again, "A faithful friend is the medicine of life and immortality." (*Ibid.* vi. 16.) So what may we not expect from the friendship of the Son of God? He is all-wise! So what a counsellor, guide, and teacher we find in Him! He is all-powerful! In all our needs, then, we can be sure of help. What blessed security against the Evil One is ours—the Lord is our protector! "Be thou unto me a God, a protector, and a house of refuge to save me. For Thou art my strength and my refuge, and for Thy name's sake Thou wilt lead me and nourish me." (Ps. xxx. 3, 4.) All-wise, all-powerful, and all-loving too! Love ensures that He will constantly exercise His wisdom and His power in our behalf. All-loving! What is there that His love has not bestowed upon destitute humanity? What would there be on this earth to please, satisfy, console us, or give us any hope, were it not for the love of Jesus Christ? And He, all-loving that He is, claims and asks to be our friend.

What an offer! what a mercy! How blessed are we in having such a friend! And why does He wish, in His infinite condescension, to be our friend? Through pure benevolence, because we are needy and poor, frail and sinful, the love of Christ urges Him to be our friend. Faithful to His title yet, "the friend of

sinners," He Who allowed Mary Magdalene to kiss His feet, and appeared first to her when risen from the dead, He does not disdain our own poor selves as friends.

How seldom have our hearts been really grateful for this friendship; in fact, looking to the past, we are ashamed and humbled to find how we have treated our Friend, Jesus Christ. Look back! What coldness, forgetfulness, neglect, ingratitude have been ours! How have we treated our Friend? We have passed most of our time with those who care nothing for Him, do not know Him—yea, with those who are His enemies. We have grumbled and found excuses not to do as He advised us and wished us. A friend! and when our consciences have known that it was He that was knocking at the door of our hearts, we have let Him knock, and kept Him outside. We did not want Him. We have pleased ourselves, followed our own evil passions, and sinned against Him. This is the way that in the past, we own it sorrowfully, we have treated our Friend Jesus Christ. We beg pardon for our ingratitude, and resolve that the future shall be different.

For how should we treat this King of friends, so loyal and so true? We should place full trust in Him. No secrets from Him, no half-confidences, no interests, no attachments that He does not approve of, no aim in life that He does not bid us take and persevere in. Trust in Him! Can we not trust in Him Who proved His love for us by dying on the cross—trust in Him Who had His side opened by the spear, that We might find a refuge in His Heart, and ever trust in Him?

We should long after Him. Our one desire should be to please Him. If love does not tell us how to long

to please, and to do all for His sake, what can teach us ? His friendship is thrown away upon us. Cultivate devotion to His Sacred Heart, and you will learn what it is to long after Him, seeking in everything, great or trivial, to please Him. Everything will be done for His sake. The intention of your heart will be "all for Jesus." Your friendship for Him will learn to be like His for you. "He that is a friend loveth at all times." All whatsoever you do—prayers, work, sufferings—will all be blest and consecrated by your longing to do them all and suffer them all for His friendship.

And, finally, my dear brethren, we must adhere to Him, and be united more day by day. Nothing must separate our hearts from Him, neither pleasure nor pain, joy nor sorrow, success nor disappointment, contentment nor bereavement. And to persevere thus day after day we need a special grace and power. And this we obtain from frequent Communion. This is practically, actually adhering to our Friend and Saviour Jesus Christ. This is what He longs for and asks of us. This is the reward He loves to have for His friendship. And it is to us not only strength and a safeguard, but it is our joy and our glory, the consummation of our friendship with our Blessed Lord, the foretaste of those heavenly joys which will be the reward of His sacred friendship. "A faithful friend is the medicine of life and immortality, and they that fear the Lord shall find Him." (Ecclus. vi. 16.)

Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost

ENCOURAGEMENT

"Fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life."—PHIL. iv. 3.

1. The encouragement from the text.
2. The ever-present danger of falling away.
3. The help from the example of our fellow-labourers.
4. The sanctification of our labours from "the fellowship" with Christ.
5. The reward—our name in the book of life.

ANYTHING that gives us heart to do our best, my dear brethren, should be remembered and treasured. And what words could give us better encouragement than these very words of the text: "Fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life"? They lift us from the weariness and monotony of well-doing, and bid us look at the reward and glory to come: "Whose names are in the book of life."

The danger for every one is that we may give up our first fervour, grow tepid, careless even, and imperceptibly fall away. This is an ever-present danger. And where would all this end? Does not the avalanche gather force and velocity as it descends, carrying everything before it in its headlong sweep, and yet it may have been started merely by a traveller's unwary footstep? We, too, are so prone to evil,

the fall is so natural, but where shall we stay if we once begin to disregard even small sins, and commit them deliberately and habitually? Oh, they are only venial! What danger lurks in this excuse! You will believe St. Paul describing some of his own converts who had grown careless: "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you weeping that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction." (Phil. iii. 18, 19.) And how did they become thus depraved? They lost their first fervour; they neglected to look up and press on; "they minded earthly things." (*Ibid.*)

And lest we fall away too, let us remember with whom we are fellow-labourers, and let us learn from them how to push on to heaven. We are fellow-labourers with the Saints of God, with that chosen band of disciples and Apostles, fellow-labourers with St. Paul himself. We are called by the same good Lord, following Him, obeying Him, strengthened with the same graces, enriched with the same Divine promises. Look at St. Paul and his companions, and mark the contrast between their lives and our own.

"One thing I do," says St. Paul, "forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before, I press towards the mark, to the prize." (Phil. iii. 13, 14.) And to his companions he says: "Let your petitions be made known to God . . . whatsoever things are true, whatsoever modest, whatsoever just, whatsoever holy, whatsoever of good fame . . . think on these things . . . these do ye." (Phil. iv. 6, 8.)

Would that we could say that these words are applicable to our own lives! Are we stretching forth ourselves? are we pressing on to the prize? Can we

truly call ourselves labourers for heaven? If the Judge this moment addressed us, "You claim heaven, and say your names are written in the book of life because you have been labourers; tell me your labours, show me what you have done," my dear brethren, our minds would be crowded with the remembrance of sins and shortcomings, of negligences and selfishness, but it would be difficult indeed to find anything worthy of the name of labour that we had done well and willingly for God. "Oh," you will answer, "there are our prayers, attendances at Mass, our confessions, our Holy Communions"—alas! that they were not more frequent!

In the old Law the Israelites were forbidden to offer to God anything that had a blemish, anything that was not perfect. "If it hath a blemish you shall not offer it, neither shall it be acceptable." (Lev. xxii. 20.) Then what about the blemishes on all that we have done for God—the distractions, coldness, irregularity of our devotions, the half-heartedness of our confessions and our Communions? And how much more ought we to have done for God if we had only been zealous, if we had only spent as many hours labouring for heaven as we have spent days for the things of this world. We must not disgrace our fellow-labourers.

But, in spite of all, we are allowed, thank God, to claim fellowship in the labours of One far greater than St. Paul and all the Saints—"the fellowship of the sufferings" of Christ. (Phil. iii. 10.) There is our hope indeed! Our poor endeavours and sufferings are sanctified by the labours and sufferings of our Redeemer. Ours receive a value from His, if we do them and suffer them for His sake, for the love of Him.

He invites us, "Come to Me, all ye that labour and are burdened." (Matt. xi. 28.) Come to Him, be united to Him in thought, and aim, and love, then the sufferings and labours of this life are magnified before the eyes of God, because they are united to the labours and sufferings of Christ. There would be no begrudging, loitering, refusing then, but we should press forward, anxious and keen, in the service of our Master.

And the reward! How different from this world are the ways of our Heavenly Father! Here there is labour and perhaps merely a bare living wage. The labour grows heavier as the years go on, and the wages oftentimes less. For most men and women no chance of saving, and thus securing comfort in sickness and old age.

On the other hand, we labour for Almighty God, and our names are written in the book of life. We labour for a short time, and even then the good God makes His burden light, and gives us the strength to bear it. Quickly this fleeting life is over, and then we know what it is to be repaid by the faithful Master, to be the heirs of God in the everlasting kingdom of His love.

Remembrance of the text puts anxiety to flight, dispels the tedium and weariness of life, prevents carelessness, gives us heart to do our best, makes us long to be worthy of our fellow-labourers, and glorify God for the promise that our "names are written in the book of life."

Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

SINS OF OMISSION

"The unprofitable servant cast ye out into the exterior darkness."—MATT. xxv. 30.

1. Need good people fear the Judgment?
2. Yes, for one special class of sins—viz., sins of omission.
3. This proved from the utterances of our Lord:
   (*a*) The man with the one talent.
   (*b*) The reasons He gives for condemning the lost.
4. Let us see, then, how we must safeguard ourselves.

ORDINARY good Catholics, my dear brethren, are sometimes tempted to think that they can scarcely be included amongst those who need dread the Judgment Day. Great and notorious sinners, scoffers, and unbelievers, such may well dread the horror and dismay of the Judgment; but they themselves, though by no means Saints, have they any real cause of fear, or is it hysterical emotion or pious exaggeration?

Would that it were an idle fear! The judgment will be a searching one; things will be brought to light that will dismay many a poor, self-satisfied soul, and the holiest of us in consternation will find how leniently we have regarded many a thing that has angered the good God. Yes, we shall see then that "hardly the just is secure."

And this surprise and consternation will chiefly be

caused by one class of sins. Not drunkenness, impurity, wilful neglect of Mass—no, those that do such things are "already judged"; they know and own that if they die unrepentant they will be condemned. "They that do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God." (Gal. v. 21.) No, it is a class of sins we think very little of, have never looked into, and perhaps have no idea of their number or their gravity. I refer to our sins of omission—the things that we might and should have done for God.

You may well inquire, how are such things sins if we have broken no commandment? Are we all bound to be Saints? If I have kept out of mortal sin, how can I be condemned? My dear brethren, has any one of us kept the First and the great Commandment? Our Bessed Lord asked the lawyer; "How readest thou?" And he repeated the Commandment from the law of Moses: "Thou shalt love the Lord Thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength." And it goes on: "And these words that I command thee shall be in thy heart; and thou shalt tell them to thy children, and thou shalt meditate upon them sitting in thy house, and walking on thy journey, sleeping and rising. . . . Take heed diligently lest thou forget the Lord." (Deut. vi. 5 *et seq.*) Which of us can claim heaven for having observed all this? Rather should we not be humble and tremble reading those words, "Thy whole heart, whole soul, whole strength, and these words to be in thy heart, meditating on them. Take heed diligently lest thou forget the Lord"?

How earnest and devout we might have been! How easy-going and careless we have been! What things we might have done for God if we had only taken heed!

What things we have neglected, because we have forgotten the Lord! Yet these sins of omission are the very ones that figure so prominently in the Gospel account of the Judgment.

Let us look into the Gospel; they are our Divine Lord's own words, and He meant us to ponder over them, learn their lesson, and be wise in time.

The parable of the Talents (Matt. xxv. 14 *et seq.*) tells us of the man going into a far country, who called his servants, and delivered to them his goods. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to every one according to his proper ability. The servants who had received the five and the two talents traded with them, and gained other five and two respectively. But he that had received the one talent, going his way, digged into the earth, and hid his lord's money. On the master's return the first two servants were commended and rewarded. But he that had received the one talent came and said: "Lord, I know that thou art a hard man, and being afraid, I went and hid thy talent in the earth; behold, here thou hast that which is thine." Now what harm had this man done? He was no thief; he had not broken the Seventh Commandment. And yet his lord answering, said to him: "Wicked and slothful servant, thou oughtest to have committed my money to the bankers, and at my coming I should have received my own with usury. The unprofitable servant cast ye out into exterior darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." My dear brethren, what had that man done but altogether omitted to do good with his grace and his opportunities?

And our Blessed Lord continues: "When the Son of man shall come in His majesty, and the Angels with Him," after blessing the just and bidding them come

and possess His kingdom, then He shall say to them also that shall be on His left hand : " Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels." Is it not a mistake ? Hear the agonized appeal of those poor souls ; they are not adulterers or murderers or drunkards ! The Judge simply says : " For I was hungry, and you gave Me not to eat ; a stranger, sick and in prison, and you did not visit Me. Then they also shall answer Him, Lord, when did we see Thee thus and did not minister to Thee ? Then He shall answer them saying : Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it not to one of these least, neither did you do it to Me. And these shall go into everlasting punishment."

We see now how we must dread these sins of omission. These are the surprises the devil has in store for the last day. How he must despise and ridicule the self-satisfied, the steady Church-goer with the hard and selfish heart, the habitually and grievously slothful and negligent, who are quite content if they avoid the pitfalls of sins against the express commandments of God.

Our only safeguard is to do all for the love of God, and with a loyalty and earnestness that will refuse nothing that God wishes and demands. We must never be content and think we have done enough. We cannot measure ourselves by what we know of others. We have to be as good and holy as God would have us be. We have to take the grace that is given to us, and trade with it to the best of our ability, lest we be cast out as unprofitable servants.

St. Patrick

"I will give to you every place that the sole of your foot shall tread on."—Jos. i. 3.

1. The conversion of Ireland the work of one man.
2. Marks of the Irish faith:
   (*a*) Prayerfulness;
   (*b*) Devotion to our Blessed Lady;
   (*c*) Loyalty to the Church;
   (*d*) Remembrance of their dead.
3. Worldly calamities, by the design of God, have turned them into the evangelizers of the earth.

THE veneration in which St. Patrick is held, my dear brethren, is due to this: that the conversion of Ireland was his own individual work. What other nation's conversion was so completely the work of one man? The Irish people were given to him as the fruit of his prayer—that prayer which by its vehemence extorted the promise from God of all that he asked for. And the words of God to Josue were made true again to Blessed Patrick: "I will give to you every place that the sole of your foot shall tread on. . . . No man shall be able to resist you all the days of your life."

You are familiar with and proud of the life and deeds and miracles of St. Patrick, but after all his great glory is the work that he left behind—the faith of the Irish people: a work that has withstood all the attacks of the world and the devil since those far-off

days, one thousand five hundred years ago, when the saintly hero laid himself down to rest, satisfied that the work he had done had been well done, that the faith he had taught would endure.

What are the marks and characteristics of this faith, which is a marvel to each succeeding age? In the old Catholic days Ireland was the land of Saints; in the days of the Reformation Ireland remained loyal to the Church; in these days of irreligion Ireland and the Irish throughout the world are recognized as the Catholic people.

The first mark is the prayerfulness of the Irish. This they inherited from St. Patrick, who amongst the Saints is pre-eminently the man of prayer. How the hills of Down have heard in the stillness of the night Patrick's long hours of prayers—aye, the very waves of the sea where he stood half frozen to keep himself awake were witnesses of his devotion! To this day this deep-rooted devotedness to prayer is found amongst his children. Who "thank God" in weal or woe so constantly as the Irish on whose tongue is that sweet word "Welcome be the will of God"? and whose "God bless you!" is as hearty as an Irish one? These are little things, but from the heart the mouth speaketh.

The second mark is devotion to our Blessed Lady. St. Patrick's favourite phrase was, we are told, "Mary Mother." And that is the keynote of Ireland's devotion—the great Mother of God, yes, to be honoured and reverenced, and Mary, their own Mother, to turn to in distress and sickness and when death is hovering near. In days gone by to use the rosary beads was to proclaim yourself Irish; in some parts we can imagine that beads were not popular for that very

reason. But that has gone, and all English-speaking people now gladly own that it is the Irish fill the churches, and that were it not for them how few churches would be needed!

The next characteristic of their faith is loyalty to Pope, Bishop, and priest. And no wonder! for St. Patrick was consecrated Bishop by the Pope, and sent by the Pope to convert the land of Ireland. May it ever be so, that the people may recognize that priest and Bishop are only the servants of the Pope, the Vicar of Christ, whose one endeavour is to carry out his wishes, and that all should obey and be guided by his infallible voice. This spirit has been so well nurtured in the past that you may look through history without finding a heresy started by an Irishman.

And the fourth and last mark is a natural result of the warm and tender hearts of the people—their love and their devotion for their dead. Maybe it is their love of home, intensified by the cruel necessity of want, that tears them from it, that makes them remember so faithfully those whose places are empty in the little circle round their hearth. Maybe it is because their graves are scattered all over the wide world that those at home think of them the more. From whatever cause it may be, the fact remains that there is a most tender and enduring devotion towards the dead found amongst the Irish. Daily prayers, rosaries, Holy Communion—yea, and in the direst poverty money will be found for a Mass for the dear ones dead and gone.

This glorious faith of the Irish people has been tried by God with every affliction, and like gold in the furnace, it has come out purer and brighter after each trial. For the last three hundred years and more

what a record it has been! Volumes have been written, but even they can say but little. Which was the most cruel, the persecution that sent Saints to heaven, hung, drawn, and quartered, like Blessed Oliver Plunkett, Archbishop of Armagh, or transportation, ship-loads sent as slaves to the West Indies, and thousands left to starve and die on the bleak shores of Nova Scotia; or the poor weary life at home, ground down in poverty and hardship? Oh, my dear brethren, why did Almighty God allow all this? Why did He allow the Infant to be born in a stable, to be brought up in poverty at Nazareth, to die on the cross on Calvary? Persecution, famine, poverty, scattered the Irish nation all over the world, and by the designs of the good God they have become the evangelizers, the propagators of the Church of Jesus Christ. Where is the Church in any clime, in any land, where at Sunday's Mass may not be found the faithful Irish on their knees? Look through the lists of Bishops and priests in England, America, Australia, New Zealand, and praise God for the numbers of Irish names that testify to the spread of the faith, and how the captains of the faithful are, like their flocks, from the land of St. Patrick.

May all who belong to this race regard it as an honour second only to their faith; may their lives add lustre to their forefather's good name; and may they do their utmost to hand on to posterity the sacred traditions and devotions which they have learned and loved as children of the Holy Catholic Church!

The Sacred Heart

"Behold how He loved him."—John xi. 36.

1. John xi., the chapter of the Sacred Heart.
   The message, comments of St. John and the Jews, the tears of Jesus—all prove it.
2. The love of that Sacred Heart is ours, if we ask for it—
   As unselfish,
   As devoted,
   As constant as was the love that raised Lazarus to life.
3. In the past our return of love spoiled by selfishness, half-heartedness, inconstancy. Let it be such no longer.

This chapter, the eleventh of St. John, my dear brethren, is a revelation to us of the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Bethania was the town of Mary and Martha, whose brother Lazarus was sick. His sisters, therefore, sent a message to our Bessed Saviour, "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick." How true was this candid, fearless message, "whom Thou lovest," is seen from St. John's comment on it. "Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister Mary and Lazarus." And here we see even in the tenderness of the Sacred Heart, and when one beloved was dying, the glory of God was Its first thought. And our Blessed Lord remained two days after that loving message before He went to Bethania. This is "for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified by it." And the sisters wondered and mourned, and still He came not; and

their brother died and was buried, and still He came not.

Oh, you who are devout to the Sacred Heart, remember this—God first, God's honour and glory first! In spite of grief and sorrow, separation and death, God to be thought of first. And then Jesus came. Both sisters made the same tender reproach: "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." And Mary, coming after and falling at His feet, said the self-same words. "Jesus, therefore, when He saw her weeping, and the Jews that were come with her, weeping, groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, Where have you laid him? They say to Him, Lord, come and see. And Jesus wept. The Jews therefore said, Behold how He loved him." Then, that they might believe in Him, the Son of God, He raised Lazarus to life.

What kind of love was this, my dear brethren, but the most unselfish, most devoted, most constant, that could be conceived? Our Blessed Lord knew what would be the result of this miracle, and it came to pass. "From that day therefore," says St. John, "they devised to put Him to death."

We can scarcely believe that it is true to say that the same love dwells in the Sacred Heart for us, if we only ask for it and want it. Yet think of the love that He has shown us, and so unselfishly. Why did He become man and die on the cross? Benevolence compelled Him: He did it simply out of love. He stripped Himself of all His glory, and became a man, that we might understand Him better and it might be easier for us to learn to love Him. "Being rich, He became poor for your sakes, that through His poverty you might become rich." (2 Cor. viii. 9.) "In all things like unto

His brethren . . . that He might be a propitiation for the sins of the people." (Heb. ii. 17.)

And could devotedness go further than Calvary? His Passion was soon over, and then, when the Church sprang into existence, love showed what devotedness could do. At every meeting of the disciples bread was blessed and distributed, and there was Jesus with them once again. In the hiding-places and dungeons of the martyrs; in the desert, to which men had to flee to live in peace; in the new, wild countries where Apostles and missioners preached His name, the devoted love of Jesus was proved by His sacramental Presence there. And when happier and more peaceful times followed, how His abodes were multiplied, and spire beckoned to spire, and tower rang out to tower, "Here is the home of the devoted love of Jesus."

The love of the Sacred Heart is constant, too—faithfully constant, in spite of all. If the long catalogue of the sins of our lifetime and our infidelities were published, then we should see the times without number and the occasions so cruel and perverse that we have tried to provoke the love of Jesus to abandon us. But no; no offence, no ingratitude, has worn away the constancy of the love of Jesus. Think of what that constancy has to put up with and endure. Not only sins, disobedience, and insubordination, but to stand aside, as it were, and see preferred before it evil companions, with their foul deeds and lewd conversation; spite and envy even banish the thought of Jesus till they have spent themselves; pleasures, frivolities, follies, greed—have all these been preferred to the love of Jesus? And the meek and blessed Saviour patiently waits His time, and when affliction or sickness turn our minds to Him, without a reproach His

love is there waiting for us, and if it does delay, it is to make us pray the more ; and He Himself gives us that power to pray, and is glad that we have turned to Him.

Constant ? Yes, constant to the very end, when nothing else is of any avail, then the power and the love of the Sacred Heart will show itself more than ever. It will come to our deathbed to claim us, to shield us, to comfort us, to take us to Himself in heaven. May we learn day by day more of the love of that Sacred Heart —how unselfish, how devoted, how constant, it can be !

After looking upon the love of Jesus for us, what an ungrateful task it is to look upon the return of love, or want of love, that we have made to Him ! Banish the thought of those who openly neglect His service and despise His mercies. Let us take ourselves, even the best amongst us, and even the love we find there that has been offered to the Sacred Heart—is it what we should like it to be ? Is it anything like what has been lavished on us ? Is it what we ourselves would be content with if we had been benefactors to some one, as Christ has been to us ? His is unselfish, devoted, constant, and ours is spoilt by selfishness—thinking of, seeking our own ends, and not His ; spoilt by half-heartedness, that keeps something back from God ; spoilt by inconstancy, fickleness, that wills and wills not, that is earnest to-day and wearied to-morrow. All these things have spoilt our love in the past ; let us be in real earnest for the time to come. And, if we asked them, Blessed Martha and Mary and Lazarus would pray for us that we might learn to love Jesus as they did.

The Most Holy Name of Mary

"And the Virgin's name was Mary."—Luke i. 27.

1. The name of Mary a power to us in our prayers. The mystery of its various meanings.
2. St. Jerome explains it—"Bitterness or Grief": symbol of her life.
3. St. Bernard—"the Star of the Sea": what Mary is to us.
4. St. Peter Chrysologus—"Lady or Queen": what Mary is in heaven.
5. Devotion during life will be rewarded at death by Mary in her threefold character.

What a place of honour is given to this holy name of Mary, in that it is joined so continually to the most Sacred Name of Jesus! What is more frequently on the lips of the devout than the ejaculation, "Jesus and Mary"? And it is a name that suits all our needs and wants—a name dear to the sorrowful, appealed to by those in need, cherished by the joyful as they glorify God. The word "Mary" was common to various countries, and varied in its meaning or signification according to the language in which it was used. So by God's design this mystical name of Mary was given to our Blessed Lady. It is an epitome of her life on earth; her care and advocacy for us; her glory in heaven.

St. Jerome, the great Hebrew scholar, tells us that "Mary" signifies "the Bitterness of the Sea," or grief—a fit name for the Mother of Sorrows, and

descriptive in one word of her life on earth. For, although the dignity of the Mother of God, which was given her, transcends all other honours, and filled her heart with ineffable joy, yet unspoken sorrow—sorrow that grew each day of her Divine Son's life—was her portion. The cross was looming in the distance all those years. And Mary was brave enough to face it —yea, to stand by it—when the dread day of Calvary should come, there to offer her Son's life for the redemption of mankind. Oh, Mother of Sorrows, teach us in our sorrows and falls and repentances to invoke that blessed name of thine, and to take courage and consolation from its meaning.

What Mary is to each of us is explained by St. Bernard when he tells us that the name "Mary" means "the Star of the Sea." She is our guide, our hope, our safety, in the perils and storms of life. In that well-known passage he bids us in the storms of temptations and tribulations not to lose sight of the blest shining of this star; if the waves of pride or ambition, of envy or detraction, overwhelm us, look up to the star, and invoke the name of Mary; if the hidden rocks of remorse, of a bad conscience, of terror of the judgment, of despair, threaten us with destruction, look to Mary and invoke her. In the perils and uncertainties of this life what a blessing to know, to remember, to be devout to Mary, the Star of the Sea! What a help and strength God has given to us in the advocacy and solicitude of His blessed Mother! We shall not be discouraged and faint-hearted, we shall not suffer shipwreck and be lost, if we continually look up to and have confidence in Mary, the Star of the Sea.

And St. Peter Chrysologus tells us of the dignity of Mary, and how her name foreshadowed her glory in

heaven, for it means "Lady or Queen." This, we feel, is becoming and proper, and is a beautiful completion to the triple meaning: her life on earth, her care for us, her glory in heaven—the Mother of Sorrows, the Star of the Sea, the Queen of all!

For Mary is the Queen of Angels as well as the refuge of sinners. As the angels worship with awe that God Who became Man and died for our salvation, so they honour and glorify that Virgin-Mother who bravely shared the sorrows and the sufferings of her Son, and is the loving refuge and Mother to those poor sinners for whom He died. If there is joy before the Angels of God over one sinner doing penance, what exultation it must be to them to have in their midst, Queen of them all, the Mother of the Redeemer, whose prayers lead poor sinners to find repentance and forgiveness.

This holy name of Mary, then, is a power to us—a power suitable for every occasion, for every condition of this life of ours on earth. The sick, the dying, the broken-hearted can find their solace praying to the Mother of Sorrows. And the hard-hearted, who feel no compunction for their sins—can they keep back their tears, if they only kneel down and pray to the Mother of Sorrows, who saw her Son die for their very sins?

And how we all, battling through life, tempted, worried, keep up our hearts and our courage, remembering Mary, the Star of the Sea, the source of hope—the Mother so quick to hear, so quick to succour. May her name be ever in our hearts, ever on our lips!

Not only individual clients, holy or sinful as they may, but the whole Church in triumph and in joy, has proclaimed the power of the glorious name of Mary, Queen of Heaven. This very Festival was instituted by Pope Innocent XI. in honour of the victory over the

Turks, when the siege of Vienna was raised, and Christendom was saved once again from the infidels.

Let us, then, day by day, be devout to our Blessed Lady, joining with that chorus of centuries—the invocation of the Holy Name of Mary! In all manner of distress and the agony of death, in joy and thanksgiving, in earnest intercession, has that name ascended up to God from the hearts of the faithful. May we continue, day by day, to invoke her now! and then how natural, how easy, how sweet, to call upon her when our last hour comes! The Mother of Sorrow will come and solace and assuage our sorrows then. When all else grows dim and dark, the light of the Star of the Sea will light up the lonely gloom around us, and, growing brighter and brighter, the Star will vanish, and it will be the effulgence of heaven, and the glory of the Queen of Heaven, that we shall see as we pass from this world to the other. Oh, may we deserve, by constant daily devotion in life, to have Our Lady with us at the hour of death. Mary, the Mother of Sorrows, the Star of the Sea, the Queen of Heaven, pray for us, and be with us at the end!

St. Michael

OUR FRIEND AT DEATH

"Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ."—Apoc. xii. 10.

1. We must be devout to St. Michael in life, if we want his friendship at death.
2. He has solicitude for us, as we learn from the prayers of the Church.
3. His loyalty to God, moreover, makes him care for us who have been redeemed.
4. We hope for his presence at death, at judgment, and soon in purgatory to liberate us.

At death, my dear brethren, we shall look for the nearest and dearest that we have to be with us, and not for strangers. Whom can we make sure of having with us then? Not a single human being! Our friends may be dead; we may be away from them all when death comes; even if we are cared for by them before the end comes we may be unconscious, and their parting words and prayers fall on unheeding ears, and our eyes may be able no longer to recognize the well-loved faces. So even if at the best, even if our relatives and friends and the priest are there, we may be quite alone in our last struggle, for all that. Sight, hearing, speech—all may be gone, and our soul waiting for the end of its imprisonment in our worn-out bodies.

My dear brethren, are we helpless now to make some

arrangement for our death ? If so, it is useless forecasting the sad, inevitable hour. It is not useless, my dear brethren, and we are not helpless. And it is now that we can make friends with one who can stand us in good stead at the hour of death. Do not leave him to come as a stranger, but by devotion now through life let us make him know how we shall yearn for him, pray for him, and trust him then. It is to the great Archangel Michael that we look to defend us in that last struggle.

We may be tempted to doubt his care and interest for us. But the prayers of the Church tell us of his solicitude. The Church would not invoke him were it not sure of his power and his help. In one prayer, as if God was speaking, the Church says : " Archangel Michael, I have appointed thee leader for the receiving of all souls." In another prayer we cry : " Michael the Archangel, come to the help of the people of God." In another : " Be mindful of us ; here and everywhere pray for us always to the Son of God." Again : " Blessed Michael the Archangel, defend us in the battle, that we may not perish at the dreadful judgment."

Can we doubt, then, his loving interest in us ? Can we doubt that power, with which God has entrusted him, to fulfil his noble mission ?

He watches over us and defends us at the command of God ; there is his power. We read in Scripture how he used this word himself. " When Michael the Archangel, disputing with the devil, contended about the body of Moses . . . he said, The Lord command thee." (Jude i. 9.) If St. Michael could fight for the body of Moses, are not immortal souls more precious still ? And try he never so hard to secure possession of our

souls, the devil will have to yield when Michael bids him, "The Lord command thee."

Yes, my dear brethren, St. Michael and the devil continue that battle, begun in heaven, over our poor souls. Recall it, and you will see why St. Michael longs to save us; it is a point of honour with him to prove his loyalty to his God. "And there was a great battle in heaven, Michael and his angels fought with the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels: and they prevailed not, neither was their place found anywhere in heaven. . . . And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying: Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ, because the accuser of our brethren is cast forth, who accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the Blood of the Lamb." (Apoc. xii. 7-11.) Defeated and cast out then, the devil can only wage war against God now by attacking the souls of men—accusing us before our God day and night. And Blessed Michael looks upon our souls, reverences them because they have been redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb; and his resolve is to snatch us from the power of the devil and to save us. He wants to do honour to his God by placing us on those thrones vacated by the devil and his fallen angels. There is a battle and a struggle, unseen by this world, over each of our souls. What a pathetic picture, that poor worn-out body and the soul within it! Unseen, unheard by men, the devil is contending for that soul, and Blessed Michael, helper and protector, keeping guard over it.

My dear brethren, is not St. Michael worth making a friend of? We can trust him, for his power has been proved by victory before. We can trust his love,

because we have been redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb, and St. Michael is eager to do all he can for God. And how sweet it will be to trust then, if we have won his regard and his friendship now! Those who have never prayed to him before, how will they dare to cry for assistance! Alas! most likely they will never think of him. What an easy prey they will be to the Evil One! Daily devotion to him now, a short but earnest prayer will secure his presence and protection then.

Dear St. Michael, we pray for thy presence when we come to die. When this world fades away, may we see thee luminous in thy glory, and feel thee comforting and protecting our soul in its last struggle! Be a friend to us at death.

And when we stand before the Judge, all alone and trembling, when the devil accuses us before our God, speak a good word for us then. Let not the adversary prevail against us then. Mayest thou be able to plead our cause successfully and secure us a favourable judgment.

There will be a parting even then. There will be the pains of purgatory to cleanse us and fit us for the presence of our God. May that time of exile be short, and for a third time may we claim thy help! "Herald of God for the just souls," as thou art called, thou wilt appear and announce to us that the time of our delivery is come. Then will the Angels lead us into Paradise, and we shall hear a loud voice, thine own, Archangel Michael: "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ."

Sermons on the Passion

THE SILENCE OF JESUS

"But Jesus held His peace."—MATT. xxvi. 63.

1. We venerate the Passion; in it, is there anything that we, in our poor way, can imitate?
2. Yes, one thing that we might and should try to do.
3. The silence of Jesus.
4. Can we refuse this offering? Our excuses.
5. Picture the control, the patience of Christ, crowned by His silence.

THE subject, my dear brethren, of our Blessed Lord's Passion is one so sacred that we fall on our knees and meditate on it, reverence it, grieve over our share in it, but seldom do we think that there is something in it that we may even imitate. We are not called upon to suffer and die for our Lord as the Martyrs, and would our faith be staunch and our courage strong to endure if it were so? Even our Divine Saviour owned, "My soul is sorrowful even unto death" (Matt. xxvi. 38), as He contemplated the Passion that He willed to undergo. My dear brethren, He does not ask us to shed our blood, to suffer so heroically; but there is one thing in which we might imitate Him and give Him honour, and show our love and compassion.

Yes, one thing that is not beyond our strength; one thing, that to be perfect we are called upon to do

many a time; one thing, the neglect of which is answerable for a vast number of sins. It is a thing that we would attempt—yea, and learn to do, if we only remembered Jesus in His Passion. "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man." (Jas. iii. 2.) Yes, we can imitate the holy silence of Jesus.

It was for a very special purpose, to impress the lesson on us, that under all manner of provocation Jesus remained silent. See how many times the Gospels mention it St. Matthew: "But Jesus held His peace" (xxvi. 63); "And He answered him to never a word" (xxvii. 14). And St. Mark: "But He held His peace, and answered nothing" (xiv. 61); "But Jesus still answered nothing" (xv. 5). And St Luke: "But He answered Him nothing" (xxiii. 9). When our Lord did reply, it was when interrogated about His doctrine and His Divinity. "Art Thou the Son of God?" Then He professed boldly—a lesson to all His followers in days to come not to be ashamed of the Gospel: "Amen I say to you, whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God." (Luke xii. 8.)

"But Jesus held His peace." There is our model. Would it not show Him that we remembered His blessed sufferings to some purpose, if we made this offering to Him of imitating His holy silence? He could remain silent, the innocent Lamb of God, unjustly accused, upbraided, blasphemed, scourged, and crowned with thorns, condemned to death. And He held His peace. How can we refuse this offering to Him, and promise to put a seal upon our lips, and to be patient and forgiving? We dare not say that we refuse, but we make excuses and say we cannot. We have such a hasty temper! Yes, but there would be

no merit if we were not tempted to break the silence. We have such provocation. Dare we mention, my dear brethren, our little troubles, annoyances, and slights, when we think for a moment of what our Blessed Lord suffered in His Passion? And the accusations brought against us—are they anything compared to the accusations that should be brought against us if only our sins were known? And the affronts we are subject to—do not our pride and vanity picture them far greater than they are? On the other hand, are we always the injured party? But have we not many a time, by our sarcasms, biting jests, unkind remarks, fault-finding, rash judgments, been amongst the rabble that insulted Jesus? What sins our tongue has got to answer for! To have these sins forgiven, for grace never to repeat them, let us imitate the holy silence of our Lord. What excuse can we find to evade this urgent duty? Could we find a better motive to impel us to try? Where can we find more solace and comfort in the daily endeavour to curb our tongue than in the blessed remembrance of the calm and peaceful Saviour in the midst of His enemies—and "He held His peace and answered nothing"? To some this imitation of the holy silence will only be a mortification to the honour of our Lord; because by God's grace they have not offended gravely or frequently in this matter. But how sweet an offering, what merit they will acquire, if, in spite of anything that occurs, they keep their lips sealed and their heart in peace, in memory and in thankfulness to Him Who in His sufferings never answered a word!

But to others, to learn to put a bridle on their lips is a stern and imperative duty. And they should thank God that they have the privilege to begin the

work under the blessing of the suffering Jesus, and that they may be helped to persevere by the assistance of His patience and self-control, wherewith He kept His peace. Those whose lips are soiled with foul language, with hasty oaths and unseemly words, especially in presence of children, gossipers, backbiters, tale-bearers, false accusers, scandalmongers—oh, if you do not wish to perish through sins of the tongue, repent now, give up the bad habit, imitate the holy silence and self-control of your crucified Lord.

Think of Him, picture Him to yourselves, and it will give you courage to do your best in this holy endeavour. Picture Him before the high priests, the false accusers, the unjust sentence, and their rage and spite because He would not commit Himself; then Pilate's questioning, and being led to Herod, before whom He never opened His lips, then back again to Pilate: ordered to be scourged, because he could find no fault with Him, and yet never a word. Then was He brought out before the people, and Pilate cried, "Behold the man." He stood there crowned with thorns, a reed for a sceptre in His hand. "But Jesus held His peace." Was that not provocation—to be cursed by people to whom He had been so miraculously kind; to be condemned by those whom He had come to save? A few hours before, the soldiers who came to apprehend Him fell to the ground at the sound of His voice. "Whom seek ye? . . . Jesus of Nazareth. . . . I am He. . . . They went backward and fell to the ground." (John xviii. 4, 5.) If He had wished, one word from those Divine lips would have hurled that multitude to the ground and silenced His enemies for ever; but no, in His mercy, "Jesus held His peace."

Sermons on the Passion

ST. PETER'S REPENTANCE

"And the Lord turning looked on Peter."—Luke xxii. 61.

1. Peter at his first communion.
2. Afterwards in the garden, asleep.
3. In evil company and dangerous occasions.
4. The look of Christ; Peter remembered.
5. The lesson for ourselves; how easy to fall away.

There is scarcely anything, my dear brethren, in the whole Gospel narrative more touching than the simple record of that look of Divine forgiveness that our Blessed Lord turned on Peter. The unselfishness of that Divine sufferer! He could forget all that was being done to Himself and take occasion to win back the erring disciple. Hell noticed that act of Divine mercy and forgiveness, and its rage was redoubled, for St. Luke immediately adds, "And the men that held Him, mocked Him, and struck Him. And they blindfolded Him and smote His face." But it was too late to blindfold Him—that blessed look of forgiveness had worked its miracle of repentance.

A few hours before St. Peter had made his first Communion. How humble he was then! For instance, when our Lord washed His disciples' feet, Peter remonstrated with Him: "Lord, dost Thou wash my feet? . . . Thou shalt never wash my feet." (John

xiii. 6, 8.) And again when our Lord said plainly, "One of you shall betray Me. The disciples looked one upon another, doubting of whom He spoke. Now there was leaning on Jesus's bosom one of the disciples whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter, therefore, beckoned to him, and said to Him, Who is it of whom He speaketh?" (John xiii. 22-24.) There was Blessed Peter's humility. He was afraid it was himself. He dare not put the question himself, but he got John to whisper to the Lord. And his fervour was equal to his humility. Did he not say to his Master, "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee to prison and to death"? (Luke xxii. 33.) "I will lay down my life for Thee." (John xiii. 37.) But he spoiled his humility and his fervour by boasting. Carried away with vehemence, he said: "Although all shall be scandalized in Thee, yet not I. . . . Although I should die together with Thee, I will not deny Thee." (Mark xiv. 29, 31.) Oh! the boasting that, though all might fail Him, Peter would not, and actually he contradicted his Master, "I will not deny Thee."

In the garden he missed his chance of getting strength to remain faithful. "Watch and pray," our Lord said, but Peter slept. So, when the betrayal took place, he was only bold for a moment, and seized the sword; but, seeing his Master apprehended, he fled with the rest. Yet he was not altogether bad, but "followed Him afar off, even to the court of the high priest." (Matt. xxvi. 58.)

And there we find him in evil company and dangerous occasions. "And going in, he sat with the servants that he might see the end." (*Ibid.*) "And when they had enkindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were sitting about it, Peter was in the midst of them. Whom, when a certain servant-maid had seen sitting

at the light, and had earnestly beheld him, she said, This man was also with Him. But he denied Him, saying, Woman, I know Him not. And after a little while, another seeing him, said : Thou also art one of them. But Peter said, O man, I am not. And after the space as it were of one hour, another certain man affirmed, saying : Of a truth, this man was also with Him, for he is also a Galilean. And Peter said : Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately as he was yet speaking, the cock crew." (Luke xxii. 55-60.) Cowardice, human respect, the voice of a woman, and the Apostle denied his Master. He had been forewarned, there had been an hour's interval, and what had all his boasting, his readiness to go to prison and death, come to ? We, who have fallen so often, can feel compassion for the poor disciple ; and he was allowed to fall, that his repentance might be a lesson and encouragement to us.

"And the Lord turning looked on Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, as He had said, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice. And Peter going out wept bitterly." (*Ibid.*, 61, 62.) The love and forgiveness that came from that one look reveal to us the depths of the infinite mercy and tenderness of Jesus Christ. What unselfishness to be mindful of His poor servant in all His own misery and degradation ! Which of us can ever be a victim of doubt or despair when we remember this look of mercy that fell on Peter ? He even had not prayed for it ; it was gratuitous ! Our Lord remembered his faith and earnestness in former days, and could not help but win him back. What if He had denied him ? Had he not also cried out : "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matt. xvi. 16.) "To whom

shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." (John vi. 69.) "Behold, we have left all things, and have followed Thee." (Matt. xix. 27.) And had all these professions of faith and deeds of sacrifice to go for nothing, because in one weak hour he had forgotten himself and guiltily denied his Master? My dear brethren, let us cherish this dear proof of our Blessed Saviour's infinite mercy. He remembers the good we have done in years gone by, and for the sake of that which was—piety, fervour, earnest endeavour—He forgives that which is—the cold, ungrateful, selfish heart within us.

But, together with firm and grateful confidence in the mercy of our Lord, taught us by that look He turned on Peter, we must have in our hearts, my dear brethren, a thorough, humble fear of denying our Master and falling away from God's service. We have been forgiven so often, perchance God's mercy may be blindfolded before it can look on us again. So we must, through grateful memory of past forgivenesses, do all we can to secure ourselves from falling again. Frequent Communion will make us humble and fervent, and, learning to love our Lord's Divine Presence more and more, we may be strong enough to despise and keep away from other company, where human respect and dangerous occasions might lead us astray. And let us pray for an abiding sorrow for sin. We so soon forget how guilty we have been. If our sin is always before us, as blessed Peter's was throughout his life, we shall have a humble and a contrite heart, which will be our safeguard. And we must learn to turn our eyes constantly to our Lord, reading His look, whether of warning, forgiveness, encouragement, or of love, which may we ever see in the eternal days to come.

Sermons on the Passion

THE GOOD AND BAD THIEF

"Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom."—Luke xxiii. 42.

1. A death-bed repentance; what is it to trust to?
2. Two thieves crucified, but one died reviling.
3. The graces that the good thief received and used:
   He took his sufferings in the right way;
   He prayed.
4. The answer to one short prayer.

Most people, my dear brethren, seem to draw the wrong moral from the episode of the thieves who were crucified with our Blessed Lord. People say, What a beautiful example of a death-bed repentance is that of the good thief! Why do they not say, What a dreadful example of final impenitence is that of the bad thief? To look at the good thief only lulls people into a false security; it seems to say, Do what you like now, but mind you pray at the end, and you will be saved. Oh! a death-bed repentance is nothing to trust to.

First, both these thieves were most highly favoured and blessed in the circumstances of their death. Of all the millions that had died since Adam, no one, except St. Joseph, was favoured as were they. They died close to Jesus, and Mary near them. They saw

Him, heard Him ; He offered up His sufferings for them, as He did for all mankind. One was supernaturally drawn towards Him, the other was not. How many death-beds of people who have lived bad lives will be blessed like that ? Even if every one was as favoured at death, you see repentance at the end cannot be trusted to. One half of us would be lost then. And the truth is that no one has such an opportunity and chance as had those men on Calvary.

They had time to repent—it was not a sudden death ; they had been caught, sentenced, led bound to Calvary, and for hours hung upon their crosses there. The stern, cruel reality of all that scene should have inspired them with fear. To behold the Lamb of God dying ; to see that mother standing by His cross ! Had they no memories of their own poor mothers ? To hear the Saviour cry, " Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (Luke xxiii. 34.) Yes, this they heard, and then " one of those robbers who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us. But the other answering, rebuked him, saying : Neither dost thou fear God, seeing thou art under the same condemnation ? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds ; but this man hath done no evil. And he said to Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom. And Jesus said to him : Amen I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in paradise." (*Ibid.*, 39-43.) Yea, more, they were alive hanging there, and there was darkness over the earth, and the centurion cried aloud acknowledging Christ, and the multitude returned striking their breasts. Everything conspired to make them full of fear and repentance ; but, after all, one was hardened and the other moved.

Though we may not trust to a death-bed repentance, the graces that led to it are graces most necessary for ourselves. The good thief took his sufferings in the right disposition. "And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds." He took his death as the proper punishment for his robberies, bloodshed, perhaps murders. His many evil deeds and all their brutality came back to him, and as he looked at Jesus, he wished the past had not been as black and guilty as it was. He could not express it, perhaps, but felt the contrast between that central Figure and themselves. And then a wave of grace came over him, and Mary would pray for him and be grateful to him as he rebuked the other thief; and in his humility and sorrow his poor lips, unused to supplication, fashioned a prayer, which millions of repentant and dying sinners have repeated since: "Lord, remember me." And what a bound of faith and hope and thankfulness his heart must have given when he heard that blessed reply: "Amen I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in paradise."

The lesson we should learn from the good thief is not to trust to the end, not to delay and put off till the approach of death, but to take our sufferings and crosses from the hand of God, and to have hope and trust in prayer. Yes, we must all bear our cross, and if we humbly take what Almighty God sends, suffering will prepare our hearts to receive God's graces and blessings as nothing else can. We must all suffer. Let us unite them with the sufferings of our Lord, and offer them for the same intention—the expiation of our sins. Sufferings will keep us near Him, make us remember Him and look to Him—yea, will drive us to pray to Him.

And sufferings patiently borne make our prayers genuine and acceptable to God. There is a hope and a trust in such prayers that they go straight to the heart of Jesus. One short prayer, and the gates of Paradise were opened to a thief! Oh! we that know our Divine Lord so well, we that have said thousands of prayers, and nothing, or so little, come of them! What is wrong with them? Perhaps we have not taken our sufferings with proper dispositions, perhaps we have only asked for earthly and selfish favours; whatever it may be, we must learn to pray like that poor dying thief. He is an example to us. Now that he is in Paradise, let us ask him to obtain for us by his prayers these graces, namely, not to trust to a death-bed repentance, but to take our sufferings humbly, and to pray with such hope and confidence that we may be heard and blessed as he was by Christ our Lord.

Sermons on the Passion

OUR LADY'S SHARE IN THE PASSION

"There stood by the cross of Jesus His Mother."—JOHN xix. 25.

1. Mary not like one of us :
   She had never sinned ;
   The Victim sacrificed was hers.
2. The chief events :
   The meeting on the way ;
   Calvary ;
   Taking down from the cross ;
   The burial.
3. Mary begrudged not the cost,—either her sufferings or the Death of Her Son, but claims our love for the Saviour.

THE subject, my dear brethren, of Our Lady's share in the Passion of her Divine Son is one to which justice can never be done. How can poor weak words of man picture to us that Mother's grief ? But, my dear brethren ; Our Lady does not ask for learning or eloquence ; a tear, a sigh, an act of sorrow, would please her far more.

And first notice the altogether different position of our Blessed Lady as regards the Passion to that which we and all mankind occupy. She differs from us, because she had never sinned. Sin brought misery and death into the world, and her Divine Son took upon Himself the iniquities of us all. After that,

how could the immaculate one refuse to suffer? Not for her own sins, because there were none; but for ours, and to be like her Son, did Mary suffer.

In one other respect, likewise, was Mary totally different from us. The Victim sacrificed was hers. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was most truly the Son of the Virgin Mary. And it was demanded of His Mother to give Him up, to allow Him to be sacrificed for the redemption of the world. And freely she gave of her own, her Divine Son, to be put to death for sin.

With this in mind—that Mary had never sinned, that the Victim sacrificed was hers—let us briefly review the share she took in the Passion of our Lord. In the devotion of the Stations of the Cross, the fourth station, "The Meeting of the Son and His Blessed Mother," is not the least touching. In spirit let us draw near to her. The dreadful night of the betrayal has passed; news had been brought to her from time to time of the apprehension of Jesus, His being dragged before the high-priests, their insults and their cruelty. What a night of mental torture! Tradition tells us that blessed Peter had found his way to her, sobbing out his sin and his sorrow that he had denied his Master. Perhaps from a distance Our Lady may have witnessed the scourging; there can be little doubt but that she heard those dreadful words, "Let Him be crucified," "His blood be upon us and upon our children." (Matt. xxvii. 23, 25.) And when the fatal procession was formed, and Jesus came forth bearing His cross, His Mother met Him. Was it to bid farewell? No, rather to bid Him go forth to be crucified for us poor sinners; to strengthen Him in beholding one faithful heart, the immaculate heart,

bearing Him company in His sufferings. She bravely followed those blessed footsteps up to Calvary. What a debt of gratitude we owe this Mother of Sorrows!

When Calvary had been reached, and the cruel work of the Crucifixion completed, and the Saviour was left to die in agony, St. John tells us, "There stood by the cross of Jesus His Mother." The cross was Mary's altar, and the Victim was prepared for sacrifice. Abraham's hand was stayed when, obedient to God, he was about to sacrifice his son. But no merciful intervention took place on Calvary. Mary acquiesced in God's most holy Will decreeing the death of her Son, Whom she joined in offering Himself for the redemption of the world. Mary gave up her Son Jesus and took us instead. Blessed be the compassion of that Holy Mother!

And when our Lord had died, they took down the dead body, and laid it in her arms. Then had Mary silent leisure to see the cruel work of mortal sin. Counting each wound as she washed it and tended it, she recounted to her soul afresh the sufferings of her Son. Let us pray her for a share in that sorrow, for our sins had caused those wounds and her unspeakable grief.

Yet there was a comfort even in this sorrow of laying out the body of Jesus. She had Him with her yet. And she had to be deprived of this sad comfort, hurried over her farewell, "for it was the day of the Parasceve, and the Sabbath drew on." (Luke xxiii. 54.)

When that sacred body of our Lord had been placed in the sepulchre, and the stone rolled to the doorway, who shall describe the loneliness and the desolation of His mother Mary? All was gone! The light of the world had gone out. But yet the brave Mother's

heart did not give way. For the grand faith was alive in that heart—sinners have been forgiven, their iniquities expiated, the great work of redemption accomplished.

Our Blessed Lady, even in her bitterest hour of trial, never begrudged the cost of our salvation. Her own interior martyrdom and the countless sufferings of her Son she freely offered for us. Our Saviour had lovingly taken on Himself to die for us; His mother had to imitate Him in His mercy and share with Him in His Passion and Death for our sakes. This we have seen she did unsparingly, lovingly, faithfully. But there is one thing that she asks, that she looks for, that she fully expects—our love. Yes, she claims our love both for her Son and for herself—for both, for love of one could not be separated from the other. Who has ever claimed our love and devotion so touchingly as the Son and the Mother from the cross on Calvary? The Son on the cross, the Mother by it. Our sins caused those sufferings, our repentance must make amends. And endeavouring to keep out of sin for the future, submission to the holy Will of God, and uniting all we do and suffer to the sufferings of Jesus and Mary, is the practical love that Mary claims. To gain such love Jesus and Mary are glad that they suffered. May we be faithful in that love, day after day; may they accept it and bless it, and hereafter reward it in the life to come!

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